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LETTERS

TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

NORTHUMBERLAND

AND

ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD,

ON SUBJECTS INTERESTING TO THE AUTHOR, AND TO THEM.

The Second Edition with Additions;

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A LETTER TO A FRIEND IN PARIS, RELATING TO MR. LIANCOURT'S TRAVELS IN THE NORTH AMERICAN STATES.

BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L. L. D. F. R. S. &c.

Nunquamne reponam?

JUVENAL.

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VARD
LLEGE
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ERRATA.

Page 9 line laſt, Note, for *those* read *theſe*.
39 line 5 *believed* read *believe*.
45 line 6 from the bottom, *reader* read *readers*.

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THE

PREFACE.

I HAVE been blamed by many of my partial friends for noticing, in theſe Letters, the low ſcurrility of Mr. Cobbet, under the name of *Peter Porcupine*. But beſides letting it paſs unnoticed for five years, it had a much more extenſive effect than thoſe friends were aware of, and had great influence not only with Engliſhmen like himſelf, who now appears to have been hired for the purpoſe, but with great numbers of native Americans, who adopted all his ſentiments concerning me; and the language of ſome of them was, and ſtill continues to be, not leſs abuſive.

My principal motive, however, for writing theſe Letters, though I did not chuſe to mention it at the time, was, that the injurious idea of my principles and conduct were adopted by ſome perſons in whoſe power it was to do more than threaten. Of this I was informed by a zealous friend of adminiſtration, of the goodneſs of whoſe information I had no reaſon to doubt, any more than of his friendſhip for me, and he aſſured me that I was particularly watched and threatened. Upon this, knowing my innocence, and that much more was generally believed of me than was true, I determined, agreeably to my uſual frankneſs, to let the public know all that I had *done*,

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and even all that *I thought*, concerning the meaſures of adminiſtration, and leave my accuſers, thus better informed, to do what they might think proper. This I, therefore, did in the following *Letters*, addreſſed to thoſe who had the beſt opportunity of knowing whether what I advanced was true or falſe; and I have reaſon to think the publication was not without ſome good effects. Even ſome of the more zealous federaliſts, as they call themſelves, who had given too much countenance to the calumnies concerning me, I have reaſon to think, have a more favourable opinion of me than they had been led to entertain.

Since the publication of theſe Letters, there has a happy change taken place in the general ſentiments of the people of this country, with reſpect to the meaſures animadverted upon in them; and, as I am told, I may flatter myſelf that, as far as the circulation of them extended, they contributed ſomething to ſo deſirable an end.

It may now be hoped, that, the people in general being now better informed concerning their true intereſt, and their real friends, by many excellent publications, eſpecially thoſe in the *Aurora*, no more attempts will be made to revive ſuch odious and ruinous meaſures; that the freedom of ſpeech and of the preſs, that true palladium of all liberty, civil and religious, will from this time be held ſacred; that the country will not again be burdened with the enormous expence of a ſtanding army, on the ſhallow pretence of oppoſing the invaſion of a foreign enemy, but for the real purpoſe of ſilencing the clamours of the people againſt an unpopular adminiſtration, or even for the ſupport of any navy beyond what may be neceſſary for the defence of the coaſting trade.

It may alſo be hoped that, in time, though not immediately, the true nature and value of *commerce* will be better underſtood, that good ſenſe will prevail over prejudice, and reaſon, and a regard to the true intereſt

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of the country, over that falſe pride which has involved other countries in needleſs wars, and brought them to the brink of deſtruction. Perhaps too the expence attending embaſſies to nations with which we have little intercourſe may be leſſened.

By this time the dread of foreigners may be preſumed to have vaniſhed, ſo that the reception, and naturalization, of thoſe who are ready to fly from the oppreſſion and miſeries of Europe may be made as eaſy as formerly, and this country become again what was its greateſt boaſt, *the aſylum of the perſecuted in the cauſe of liberty, civil and religious.* And it ſhould be borne in mind, that from this encouragement every country will derive the greateſt advantage as well as the greateſt glory. For the perſecuted are commonly the moſt active and ingenious as well as the moſt conſcientious of men; and they will bring with them, in the arts and improvements of various kinds, what will abundantly repay the country for the advantages they derive from it.

It were farther to be wiſhed that, ſince the *ſedition act* is now generally thought to have been unconſtitutional, a proper opportunity will be taken of ſolemnly declaring it to have been ſo, and alſo to indemnify, as far as it can be done, thoſe who have ſuffered by the operation of it. Of the equally obnoxious *alien act*, it was happy that no advantage was taken, notwithſtanding the clamour that was made for it in my caſe, and perhaps that of others.

The ſincere good will that I bear to this country, and my admiration of its general conſtitution, lead me to expreſs a wiſh, that in future it may be better guarded againſt miſconſtruction and abuſe, eſpecially by putting it out of the power of a Preſident, and a part of the ſenate, to encroach upon the powers expreſsly given to the whole congreſs, to regulate commerce, and decide all queſtions concerning peace or war; and that ſome plan may be adopted to guard any other

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part of the conſtitution, and to facilitate any real improvement of it.

Laſtly, may it not be hoped that, in the prevalence of moderation and liberality, ſome cenſure will be paſſed on the alarming doctrine of *conſtructive treaſon* advanced in the trial of Mr. Fries. His conduct, and that of thoſe who joined him, was certainly cenſurable, and deſerving of puniſhment. But no perſon out of the vortex of party can well imagine that they had any deſign to *overturn the conſtitution;* and therefore the offence could not be that of *high treaſon.*

On the principle advanced by judge Chaſe, I do not ſee but that any other offence againſt the peace and good order of ſociety may be judged to be high treaſon; and this leads to confound all crimes and puniſhments. It makes all laws, like thoſe of Draco, to be written in blood. Such an abuſe of profeſſional knowledge and power is deſerving of the ſevereſt animadverſion, and the Preſident deſerved well of his country for giving no countenance to it.

All that I can do as an inhabitant of the country (as much intereſted in its welfare as any other inhabitant, foreigner or native) is to endeavour, in the ſphere in which I move, and by the means that are in my power, to promote its proſperity; and this, at my time of life, muſt chiefly conſiſt in giving my honeſt opinion, as in this publication I have done, by what meaſures this proſperity may be moſt effectually promoted. But after giving this opinion, with the reaſons on which it is founded, I muſt, as becomes every good citizen, acquieſce in the deciſions of the legitimate rulers, whether I can approve of them or not.

N. B. As the primary deſign of thoſe *Letters* was the vindication of my character and conduct, I ſhall ſubjoin to this edition, a *Letter to a friend in Paris*, which has the ſame object.

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TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF

NORTHUMBERLAND

AND ITS

NEIGHBOURHOOD.

LETTER I.

Of my Situation as an Alien.

My Friends and Neighbours,

WHEN any perſon becomes an object of more ſuſpicion than he wiſhes to lie under, he naturally appeals to thoſe who have had the beſt opportunity of knowing him; and if they be ſatisfied with reſpect to his conduct, it is the beſt means of ſatisfying others. This unpleaſant character of a *ſuſpected perſon*, hoſtile to the country in which I live, aggravated by the conſideration of its having afforded me protection when I could not live with comfort, or even with ſafety, in my native country, you well know I have borne for ſome time.

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I think it barely poſſible for a man who has, in the five years that I have been among you, done ſo little of an offenſive nature, to have become the object of more ſuſpicion and rancour than I have incurred. The moſt popular writer in this country, and who receives the greateſt countenance from the perſons in power, ſays, "I hope I ſhall ſee the malignant old Tartuff "of Northumberland begging his bread through the "ſtreets of Philadelphia, and ending his days in the "poor houſe, without a friend to cloſe his eyes." The curſe of Ernulphus in Triſtram Shandy does not exceed this.

In order to keep as clear as poſſible, and as free from ſuſpicion, with reſpect to the politics of this country, I did not chuſe even to be naturalized, and the Preſident, to whom I mentioned my objection to it, much approved of my reſolution. But I find that this precaution has not availed me any thing.

Being an *alien*, the Preſident has been again and again called upon to carry into execution againſt me the late act of congreſs reſpecting aliens. It has been ſaid, that "if what I have done paſſes unnoticed by govern-"ment, it will operate as the greateſt encouragement "that its enemies have ever received. They will ſay "and juſtly too, that tho' the Preſident is armed with "power, he is afraid to make uſe of it, and that the "alien law is a mere bug bear."

I hope, however, to convince you that ſuch an order would be cruel and unjuſt; for that I am not ſo very dangerous a perſon as this writer and his party ſuppoſe.

That I may conduct this addreſs to you with ſome regard to method, I ſhall firſt conſider what is objected to me from what *I am*, and then from what *I have done*. After this I ſhall tell you what I *think*, both with reſpect to your government in general, and the late adminiſtration of it, with the reaſons on which my opinions are founded; and thus you will know

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better than you can do at preſent what to think of me, and of my accuſers too. In doing this I ſhall, with Pope,

———pour out all myſelf as plain,
As honeſt Shippen, or as old Montagne.

In the firſt place, then, I am to conſider what is objected to me from what *I am*. In ſome reſpects neither praiſe nor blame will attach to what a man *is*, becauſe it was not in his power to have been any other. It will not, for inſtance, be objected me, at leaſt as an unfavourable circumſtance, that I am a native of England, even by thoſe whoſe greateſt boaſt it is that they are native Americans. Nor ſhall I be cenſured for ſaying, what I always have done, and what with great truth I repeat, that I am proud of my native country, and am as ſincere a well wiſher to it as any American can be to this country. It does not depend on ourſelves, but upon our parents, and upon God, who aſſigns to every man his proper ſtation and duty, where we ſhall be born.

But of what importance is it where I was born, or whence I came; whether I dropped among you from the clouds, or roſe out of the earth? Here I am. Here is my family. Here is my property, and every thing elſe that can attach a man to any place. Let any perſon only view my houſe, my garden, my library, my laboratory, and the other conveniencies with which I am ſurrounded, and let him withal conſider my age, and the little diſpoſition that I have ſhewn to ramble any whither, and ſay whether any perſon among yourſelves, or in the United States, could remove with more difficulty, or with more loſs, than I ſhould do. And yet there are great numbers who would think no more of an order to ſend me out of the country (which it is in the power of the Preſident to give, and even without deigning to give me a hearing) than if I was a pauper, without houſe or home; and they would

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rejoice as much in it as if I had been a burden to the diſtrict.

It is ſurely, alſo, as probable that I ſhall have a real attachment to a country, and the government of it, to which I came *voluntarily*, and from a preference of them to any other, as if I had been a native, and conſequently had had no choice in the caſe. Is it ſuppoſed by my adverſaries that I have any predilection for England, or the government of it, merely becauſe I was born there?

If I am an alien myſelf, my ſons are naturalized; and muſt not a father feel for them? Can he be an enemy to the country to which they belong?

I have been repeatedly repreſented as a man ruined by ſpeculations in land, and driven into faction by want. But it is not unknown to you that, except the purchaſe of ſome lands on the Loyalſock, in which I am intereſted in conjunction with my ſon and others, who made the purchaſe before my arrival, and on which a promiſing ſettlement is now making, I have made no purchaſe whatever, except for the convenience of my perſonal reſidence. You who know me, and the manner in which I live, will be ſurpriſed to hear of my poverty. Though I do not boaſt of my riches, I am thankful to a good providence for an abundant competence, equal to all my wants.

You will more particularly ſmile to hear my accuſer ſay, that I live in "a *ſhed*, which I dignify with "the name of a *houſe*;" when you know that, with reſpect both to convenience and elegance, it is ſuperior to any houſe in the county, and excepting Philadelphia, and its neighbourhood, there are perhaps few that are equal to it in the whole State. It would be a better founded objection to ſay, that its appearance is too Ariſtocratical for the habitation of a Democrat. My library and philoſophical apparatus are, without boaſting, ſuperior to any thing of the kind in this country, and of much more value than my houſe. How fac-

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tious ſoever I may have been, you are ſatisfied that my circumſtances could not have furniſhed any motive for factious conduct.

He alſo ſays that, " like Mr. Vaughan, I ſhall leave " this country in dudgeon the moment I can do it " with a proſpect of living elſewhere with ſafety and " in eaſe." You who know the proviſion I have made for ſpending my days in comfort here, are better judges of the probability of this than any perſon at a diſtance can be. Mr. Cobbet's account of myſelf, and my conduct, in his pamphlet on the ſubject of my emigration, has juſt as much truth in it as his account of my houſe and my intentions.

It is, however, moſt ſeriouſly objected to me that I am a *French citizen*, and have adopted *French principles ;* and in the opinion of many perſons thoſe principles are truly diabolical, ſo that I might as well have come to you from the infernal regions. This I feel to be dangerous ground ; but having undertaken to give you the beſt account that I can of what I *am*, I ſhall, if you will have the courage to follow me, venture upon it in my next Letter. In the mean time, I am,

My Friends and Neighbours,

Your ſincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

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LETTER II.

Of French Citizenſhip, and French Principles.

My Friends and Neighbours,

IN my laſt I promiſed to conſider what is objected to me as a *Citizen of France.* This I find to be an accuſation of a very ſerious nature. For on this account alone it is taken for granted that I *muſt* be an enemy to this country, which for ſome time paſt has been in a ſtate nearly bordering on open hoſtility with France*. Mr. Hall conſiders it as a ſufficient proof of Mr. Cooper's being inimical to this country, that, on a late occaſion, he was ſuppoſed to have acted in concert with *me*; as if I was not only avowedly hoſtile to this country myſelf, but muſt neceſſarily communicate the ſame hoſtile diſpoſition to all perſons who have any communication with me.

But, my friends, hear a little reaſon on this ſubject. You have heard a great deal that is not reaſon, but mere paſſionate declamation upon it; and eſpecially attend to the circumſtance of the *time* in which I was made a citizen of France, and the occaſion of it. It was ſimply as a well known friend of general liberty, in conſequence of my having written in defence of

* I ſhould have hoped that, as a *ſtranger* and an *alien*, deprived by an act of Congreſs, of the protection of the law, I ſhould have been conſidered as having the ſtronger claim on the forbearance and kindneſs of my neighbours, eſpecially thoſe with whom I had had any friendly intercourſe; and that if I *had* ſaid or done any thing that might have brought me into danger, it would have been concealed, rather than have been, without any provocation, or neceſſity, brought forward to the view of the public. But what rights are they that party ſpirit will reſpect? Not always even thoſe of nature, much leſs thoſe of neighbourhood and acquaintance.

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the liberties of America, as well as thoſe of France, and as one who had ſuffered in the cauſe.

Conſider alſo that at that time there was no ſuſpicion of a war between England and France. The French king was then living, the conſtitution of France was then reduced to a limited monarchy reſembling that of England, and other Engliſhmen, and among them Mr. Wilberforce, a faſt friend of Mr. Pitt, were made citizens of France. He was diſtinguiſhed in this manner on account of his taking the lead in the meaſures that were adopted for the abolition of the ſlave trade. It was alſo, I believe, at the ſame time that your General Waſhington received the ſame compliment; and ſurely you do not for this ſuſpect *him* of being your enemy.

In theſe circumſtances it is very poſſible that any native American might not have thought it at all diſreputable to have been made a citizen of France, obnoxious as the character happens to be at preſent. I certainly conſider it as an honour to me, and think that I have more reaſon to be proud of it than of being a *native* of any country whatever. I wiſh I had done more to deſerve it.

But it is alleged by thoſe who wiſh to make the moſt of every circumſtance that can be conſtrued to my prejudice, that, beſides being a citizen of France, I was elected a member of the Conventional Aſſembly, appointed for the purpoſe of framing a new conſtitution for that deteſted country, and that this implies a nearer relation to it. To this, alſo, I plead guilty. I was elected in a great number of the departments of France, and was informed that I ſhould have been elected in many more, but that it was well underſtood that I certainly ſhould be in others. I ſhould have been elected for the department of Paris, if it had not been for the oppoſition of Robeſpierre, who very properly objected to it, as not fit for any foreigner. I ſaw the honourable propoſal in the ſame light. I was

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pleaſed with the compliment, but declined the office; and what could the proudeſt native American have done more? Theſe circumſtances, I am willing to think, will be deemed to operate as ſome extenuation of my offence.

Conſider, alſo, the change that has taken place with reſpect to *opinions*, as well as other things, in the laſt five years among yourſelves. When I came to this country, in the year 1794, I found the people in general in uniſon with me on this ſubject. On all public occaſions, *Succeſs to the Arms of France* was never omitted among the toaſts that were drank. Complaints were at that time univerſally made of the inſolence and injuſtice of the Engliſh, and even an open rupture with England was generally expected. There was no complaint of *French principles* then, tho' they were the ſame that they are now. They were univerſally conſidered as the principles of *general liberty*, and the ſame with *American principles*, that is *republican*, in oppoſition to *monarchical*. The change, therefore, that has taken place is not in *me*, but in the people here; and conſidering that old men do not eaſily change their ſentiments, or attachments, if I muſt change, you muſt allow me more time, and this I cannot pretend to fix; but I ſhall be as expeditious as I can.

If by French principles be meant the principles of the *French government*, I do not ſee where they differ in any thing that is eſſential from thoſe of your own. In neither of the two conſtitutions are there any hereditary honours or powers. All offices are elective, and for a moderate time. In both there are three diſtinct powers, an executive, a ſenate, and a houſe of repreſentatives; tho' not called by the ſame names, or connected in quite the ſame manner; and in neither of the countries is there any form of religion eſtabliſhed by law.

The great outline of the two conſtitutions is, therefore, the very ſame. In ſome other things they differ,

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as in their executive there are *five* perſons, and in yours only *one**. But which of them is beſt adapted to anſwer its end experience only can decide. Tho' each has its peculiar advantages, as in a future letter I may ſhew, and I am diſpoſed to give the preference to that of this country; yet as far as I can ſee, either of them may do very well, and whatever is found to be inconvenient in either of them may be changed at a proper time. So great an agreement as this might be expected to lay a foundation for friendſhip, eſpecially as the French nation, with whatever view (which it does not behove any ſtate to ſcrutinize very narrowly) gave you material aſſiſtance in aſſerting your liberties, and then followed your example in aſſerting their own; changing their monarchical government for a republican one.

The moſt opprobious appellation with which thoſe who call themſelves *Federaliſts* reproach us, as a conſequence of our adopting French principles, is that of *democrats*. Democracy, they ſeem to think, the greateſt of all crimes, and the perſons chargeable with it not fit to be tolerated in any regular government. But my friends, pray conſider what *democracy* really means. It ſignifies nothing more than *the government of the people*, or a conſtitution in which the people chuſe all their magiſtrates, and in which the magiſtrates are accountable to the people, or their repreſentatives, for their conduct in office, which is exactly the conſtitution of this country. Every man, therefore, who is not a democrat is an enemy to this conſtitution. What ſtrange and arbitrary meanings our enemies may annex to this word I cannot tell, nor do I believe they know themſelves; but I have not met with any democrat who uſed the word in any other ſenſe than that which I have now given to it.

* In the laſt conſtitution of France the executive power is lodged in one hand, ſo that it more nearly reſembles that of thoſe States.

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Our enemies will tell you that by democracy we mean a ſtate of anarchy and confuſion, a government by mobs, and an equalization of all property. But can any of you really believe that a perſon of my ſmall property would wiſh for ſuch a ſtate as this, or that a perſon of my age would like to ſcramble among the ſtrongeſt of you for what I could get? If that was to be the caſe, I ſhould expect to be very ſoon turned out of my houſe, and left to ſtarve among you. If you can be made to believe this of us, you are eaſily impoſed upon indeed, and might be made to fear leſt the ſky ſhould fall, that fire might be ſet to your river, or that an army of French canibals might croſs the Atlantic in a fleet of balloons, land on the blue mountain, and eat up all your children for their firſt breakfaſt. For theſe are not more improbable than the other.

As by democracy we mean a government of the *people*, and not of the *mob*, ſo by *equality* we mean an equality of *rights*, and of power both to acquire property, and to keep it; the equality that actually exiſts in this country. This has been explained ſo often that our enemies muſt know it to be our whole meaning.

You are angry at the French for their captures of your ſhips, as you were before at the Engliſh on the ſame account, and I believe you had reaſon in both caſes. But do not lay the blame on French or Engliſh *principles*, but on the adminiſtration of the countries. The French themſelves are far from approving of the conduct of all their rulers, and ſtill leſs of all that are employed by them. Why then muſt I be ſuppoſed to approve of all the attrocities of Robeſpierre, with which I am continually charged, merely becauſe I am an adopted citizen of France? I condemn them as much as you can do, and hope they will not occur again. I find, however, that, in the opinion of ſome, I muſt bear the blame of all that has been done in France, even ſince I have had no communication with

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that country, or knowledge of what paſſes in it, and perhaps of all the crimes that may be committed there after I am dead.

But they who are the loudeſt in their exclamation againſt French principles, appear to me to know nothing of any principles of government. For it is impoſſible to reprobate the general principles of the French government, and not include thoſe of the American government in the ſame cenſure. It may, therefore, be fairly preſumed that they are diſſatisfied with this government, and wiſh to overturn it. This would give me the greateſt concern. I came hither from the preference I gave to it; and any material change in it would certainly, old as I am, drive me away again. With your immortal Franklin, I ſay *Where liberty is, there is my country.* Of the American conſtitution, I therefore ſay, *Eſto perpetua.*

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

Of my Right to treat of Subjects of civil Policy, and the Advantages I have had for acquiring Knowledge of this Kind.

My Friends and Neighbours,

HAVING conſidered what is objected to me on account of what I *am*, I proceed to what I have *done;* and indeed this is of much more importance than the

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other. For what does it ſignify what a man *is*, or what character he ſuſtains, if he do nothing in conſequence of it? But it is urged againſt me that I have not been an idle ſpectator of what is paſſing; for that I actually buſy myſelf in the politics of the country, and with theſe it is ſaid I have nothing to do.

Before I inform you what I *have done*, or what I have *not done*, give me leave to obſerve that, though I am an *alien*, I cannot allow that I have no right to have an opinion with reſpect to the government of the country in which I live, or to expreſs my opinion, in words or in writing, if I be ſo diſpoſed.

Can any man, whoſe perſon and property are in any country, be wholly unconcerned about the conduct of its affairs? Though a man may be a mere *paſſenger* in a ſhip, muſt he be content to ſee it ſuffer, or ſink, and not give his opinion how it might be ſaved, becauſe he is not the *owner*, the *captain*, or any *officer* on board acting under him. I have heard, indeed, of a man who when he was alarmed with the cry of fire in the houſe in which he was ſleeping, ſaid "what is that to me, I am only a lodger." But his conduct is not generally thought worthy of imitation.

When Dean Swift, who was an Engliſhman reſiding in Ireland, wrote about the politics of that country, and by his *Drapier's Letters* prevented the circulation of Wood's halfpence, was there any complaint of his interference on account of his being a *foreigner?* And had I done any thing pleaſing to thoſe who now complain of my conduct, their complaints would not have been heard. Do the ſame perſons complain of the writings of Peter Porcupine; who, as an alien, ſtands in the ſame predicament with myſelf? Had I, like him written any thing in praiſe of the meaſures of adminiſtration, I might have done it without any cenſure, as well as he.

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On the principles of my accuſers, had I diſcovered a certain method of preventing or curing the yellow fever, or of deſtroying the Heſſian fly, I muſt not have divulged it becauſe I am an alien. But if I be at liberty to do *good*, it muſt be what I myſelf deem to be good, and in my own way alſo, and with reſpect to all ſubjects indiſcriminately, that of politics not excepted. Another perſon muſt not think, judge or act, for me.

If I had nothing at ſtake in the country (and I have much more than thouſands of native Americans) is it poſſible for a man to ſee any company, in which, from the preſent intereſting ſtate of public affairs, there is hardly any other topic of converſation than politics, or read your newſpapers, in which topics of this kind are continually diſcuſſed, and form no opinion about them? And if he have an opinion, can he forbear to let his acquaintance know what that opinion is, when perhaps they are inquiſitive, and wiſh to know it?

I have another apology to make for the conduct that is objected to me. Having never had much capacity for the more *active* purſuits of life, I had from very early years a turn for *ſpeculation* on every ſubject that has come before me; and they have been very various, as my writings will ſhew. Among them *politics*, in ſuch a country as England, could not be excluded, any more than *religion*, or *philoſophy*. And being now old, and of courſe leſs active, I am more diſpoſed to *think*, and having more experience, I preſume I am rather better qualified for it than ever. Have the candour, therefore, to bear with my thinking, and with my talking, and writing too, as you do with reſpect to other old men, though you ſhould be of opinion that what I think, ſpeak, or write, is not ſo much to the purpoſe as you could wiſh it to be.

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As I own I am ſometimes diſpoſed to think, and to ſpeak on the ſubject of politics, as well as on other topics, you muſt excuſe my vanity, if I imagine that I am in ſome meaſure not unqualified for it. At leaſt I have, in the courſe of a very various life, had the means of acquiring ſome political knowledge.

I was ſeven years in the family of the Marquis of Lanſdown which was altogether a political houſe, where I daily ſaw, and converſed with, the firſt politicians not only of England, but from all parts of Europe. And, independent of that connexion, I have had more or leſs intercourſe with moſt of the political living characters whoſe names you have heard mentioned, and with many that you have not heard of. Beſides the principal politicians of England, both in and out of the miniſtry, I was perſonally acquainted with ſome of the moſt eminent in France, both before and ſince the revolution: as Mr. Turgot, Mr. Neckar, Mr. Briſſot, Mr. Pethion, and the Duc de Rochfocault, who was my conſtant correſpondent from the time that I was in France to that of his unfortunate death.

I am ſenſible that what I am now ſaying will have the air of boaſting. But if, as Solomon ſays, there be *a time for all things*, my preſent ſituation may juſtify it me, as a ſimilar one did in the apoſtle Paul.

Though my writings, as you may ſee by the catalogue of them, relate chiefly to theology, philoſophy, or general literature, ſome of them are political, eſpecially my *Eſſay on the firſt principles of government*, and my *Lectures on Hiſtory and General policy*, which are read in ſome of your colleges. As well for the compoſition of this work, as to enlarge my knowledge of the ſubject, there are few political publications of much note that I have not read, and with ſeveral of the later and the moſt eminent writers on ſubjects of policy I was perſonally acquainted, as the Abbe Raynal, and Dr. Adam Smith, the author of the celebra-

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ted treatiſe on the *wealth of nations*. If, therefore, I have no knowledge of the ſubject of politics, it has not been for want of the means, or the opportunity, of acquiring it.

I ſhould hardly have been thought of as a proper perſon for a member of the conventional aſſembly of France, choſen in what is reckoned the beſt times of their revolution, for the expreſs purpoſe of forming a new conſtitution of government for that country, if I had not had ſome character for knowledge of this kind. My knowledge of theology, or chemiſtry, would not have recommended me to that ſituation.

Your Preſident, with whom I was well acquainted when he was ambaſſador in England, and with whom I occaſionally correſponded from that time till he was advanced to his preſent ſituation, will excuſe me if on this occaſion I quote his authority. Having in one of my publications declared my preference of one of his political maxims to that which was maintained by Dr. Franklin, he ſays in one of his letters, that he conſiders it as "a compliment which he holds very pre-"cious." With Dr. Franklin, who was as much a political as a philoſophical character, I was intimately acquainted many years. His letters to me would have made a very large volume. Three of them he has publiſhed in his miſcellaneous works.

Notwithſtanding theſe advantages which I have had for political information, and the obſervation and experience of a long life, many of the young men of this country, being *native Americans*, think themſelves, I doubt not, much wiſer than I pretend to be, and will make very light of any opinions of mine. Be it ſo. It is in the order of Providence that ſucceeding generations ſhould grow wiſer than the preceding ones; and if the youngeſt of the native Americans will teach me any thing, I ſhall not think myſelf too old to learn.

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The great principles of ſound policy are not, in my opinion, above the comprehenſion of young men, and even ſuch as have not had the advantage of a learned education. The circumſtances that contribute to the flouriſhing ſtate of a country, which is the proper object of all civil policy, are eaſily known, and the operation of them in all particular caſes would be as eaſily underſtood, did not prejudice and paſſion miſlead men's judgments. But in conſequence of this, the ſchemes of ſome of the moſt profound politicians have brought nations to the very brink of ruin. What is it that has been effected by the great politicians of Europe in the laſt century, beſides involving their reſpective countries in a ſtate of perpetual war? When has peace been made, but when the people were ſo exhauſted that war could not have been carried on any longer? And in conſequence of theſe violent exertions, are they not all loaded with debts which neither the preſent nor any future generation will ever be able to pay, and which muſt haſten the period of *bankruptcy*, and *revolution*, which they ſo much dread. Can you contemplate all this and call it *wiſdom?*

Since, however, the ſubject of politics has not in itſelf any greater difficulty attending it than even young men may ſurmount; and ſince it is chiefly *paſſion* that miſleads men's judgments with reſpect to it, it is ſurely the leſs preſumption in old men, whoſe paſſions are generally more under the command of reaſon than thoſe of young men, to think and write upon it.

I am, &c.

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LETTER IV.

Of what I have done with Reſpect to the Politics of this Country.

My Friends and Neighbours,

THOUGH I have not been prevented by any peculiar difficulty that there is in the ſubject of *Politics*, or by the ſuppoſed impropriety of an alien attending to it, from taking a part in your political differences, I have had other views and purſuits; and having had much leiſure in this country, I have done ſo much in other ways, that I think I can convince you that I have not been that buſy, intriguing, and dangerous politician, that I am repreſented to have been.

Of my publications in England, which I believe are about an hundred, very few relate to politics. My publications in this country are not leſs than *twelve*, all theological or philoſophical, beſides three articles in the *Tranſactions of the Society of Philadelphia*, and eleven that are printed in the *Medical Repoſitory* at New-York; three more are ſent, but are not yet printed; and I have four or five articles ready to ſend to the Society at Philadelphia.*

Beſides theſe works, I have juſt printed in this place a large volume intitled *a Compariſon of the Inſtitutions of Moſes with thoſe of the Hindos and other ancient*

* In philoſophy I am combating the principles of the *French Chemiſtry*; and as every thing that is *French* is now unpopular, the Federaliſts may be expected to wiſh me ſucceſs. Of this, however, I am as confident as the allied powers are that they ſhall conquer France, and overturn its republican Government, tho' at preſent almoſt all chemiſts in this country, as well as in Europe, are ſtrongly attached to it.

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nations. I have compoſed a *Continuation of my Church hiſtory to the preſent time*, which will make ſix volumes 8vo, and about as many of *Notes on the Old and New Teſtament*, part indeed compoſed in England, but deſtroyed at the riots in Birmingham, and recompoſed here. You will pleaſe to obſerve that in merely writing *much*, there is no other merit than that of *induſtry*, a quality which I believe my greateſt enemies will allow me.

Tho' I have written ſo much ſince I have reſided in this place, I generally ſpend the greateſt part of my time in my laboratory, making experiments, the object of which is not gain, but the extenſion of natural knowledge. Judge then yourſelves whether it has been *poſſible* for me to have given much attention to the peculiar politics of this country.

It is true, as I have obſerved, that I could not help forming ſome *opinion* on ſubjects that are continually before me; and I will not deny that it accords better with my former principles and habits of thinking to take part with thoſe who diſapprove of the late meaſures of your government, and are generally called *Democrats*, than with thoſe who call themſelves *Federaliſts*, whoſe language and ſentiments appear to me to be very congenial to thoſe of the friends of monarchy, and high maxims of government, in England. My political opinions, however, I have not been forward to obtrude on others; and if the private opinions of one man, and that an alien, can ſhake any country, it cannot ſtand long.

I do not know, nor have I any reaſon to believe, that any one of you has changed his opinion in politics in conſequence of my reſidence among you. Whatever be your ſentiments in this reſpect, they are wholly independent of me. You alſo well know, that my opinions have had no more influence on any of my countrymen in this place than they have had on yourſelves.

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Tho' what I have done in theology and philoſophy may ſeem ſufficient to have occupied me wholly, I will now gratify my enemies by informing them, that notwithſtanding this, I have actually found time both to *ſay* and to *do* ſomething with reſpect to the politics of the day, and ſomething which without my own voluntary confeſſion, they could not have found out. In the *Aurora*, that recepticle, as it is conſidered, for all ſeditious and treaſonable matter,* for Feb. 26 and 27, 1798, there is an article of mine, which will be thought to be of a ſuſpicious complexion, ſigned *a Quaker in Politics*. But to ſave them the trouble of looking for it, I ſhall reprint the whole of it at the end of theſe Letters. This, however, is all that I have *written* till the preſent time.

But tho' I have written nothing more than this ſingle article myſelf; yet approving of Mr. *Cooper's eſſays* in your Gazettee, I contributed one dollar towards printing a few extra copies of one of them, before it was known that they would all be reprinted in the form of a pamphlet. However, to make amends for this fault, and to ſhew my impartiality, and my deſire to promote the free diſcuſſion of ſubjects of importance to the community, I here promiſe that if any Federaliſt will give as comprehenſive and as diſpaſſionate a view of what they have to advance in ſupport of the late meaſures, as Mr. Cooper has done againſt them, I will give another dollar towards that publication. I fear, however, it will not be in the power of

* Tho' I ſee almoſt all the newſpapers that are printed in Philadelphia, it is to this that I give the preference. In England I was a reader of the *Morning Chronicle*, which was then patronized by the friends of liberty in that country; but I do not think that, in its beſt times, it was ſuperior to the *Aurora* with reſpect to juſt ſentiment, valuble information, or good compoſition. The Federaliſts of this country, who ſeldom, I believe, read this paper, muſt be ignorant of many things that it behoves them to know. Having ſaidt his, I muſt expect to be made anſwerable for every thing that ever has been, or ever will be printed in the Aurora.

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Mr. Cooper's antagoniſt to fulfil the conditions on which I make this promiſe. Perſons writing in ſupport of any government, being ſure of protection, if not of reward, are apt to indulge themſelves in intemperate language, as a mark of their zeal in the cauſe; while the dread of penal laws naturally makes the oppugner of them timid, and conſequently more guarded and decent in his language; mindful of the Latin adage, *leniter in modo, fortiter in re.*

The writer who ſtiles himſelf *Maſſachutenſis*, gives me more merit than I am entitled to with reſpect to Mr. Cooper's publication, when he ſays that "I took "great pains to circulate it, that I travelled thro' the "country for the purpoſe, and that I was, in fact, "the patron of it." The fact was, that I never ſaw any of the papers till after their publication, and all that I did with reſpect to the circulation of the extra copies was to carry a bundle of them from the printer's to the houſe of a brother democrat in this town, which might as well have been done by the printer's boy.

I do not, however, ſay this to exculpate myſelf from any crime. For I conſider both the writing of the letters in queſtion, and the circulation of them, as praiſe worthy actions. Maſſachutenſis calls Mr. Cooper an *Engliſh Jacobin*, but this is merely a term of reproach. The principles that Mr. Cooper has maintained are clearly thoſe of the American Conſtitution. Whoever denies this, either does not underſtand thoſe principles, or is an enemy to them; and as the ſubject is ſufficiently intelligible, the latter is the more probable ſuppoſition of the two.

The paragraphs which this writer ſelects, as particularly obnoxious, I entirely approve. For certainly the man who ſhould wiſh to extend the power of the Preſident of this country beyond the bounds preſcribed by the conſtitution, could not take better ſteps to

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gain his ends than thoſe that are pointed out by Mr. Cooper. At the ſame time, it is not denied, nor does Mr. Cooper deny it, that the ſame things might be done from other motives. But, as he obſerves, we have nothing to do with men's *motives*, but only with the *tendency of their meaſures;* and of this we muſt form our judgment from conſidering their nature, and the circumſtances of the caſe.

For what I did in this buſineſs Maſſachutenſis, who conſiders it as a crime of a peculiarly heinous nature, ſays "I ſtand charged before the great tribunal of the "American people!" I do not, however, conſider an anonymous writer in a newſpaper as the *American people*. But whenever this people, whom I reſpect, ſhall arraign any part of my conduct by their authorized officers, in due form, I ſhall be ready to meet the accuſation. In the mean time, theſe Letters may be ſufficient.

That I may leave nothing on my conſcience relating to this ſubject of what I have *done*, I will farther confeſs that, averſe as I generally am to public meetings, which are often attended with much noiſe, to which, from the habits of a ſtudious life, I am much averſe, I was prevailed upon to join in two celebrations of the 4th of July, one of them two years ago, in a grove near this town, and this year in another near Sunbury, at both of which republican or democratical toaſts were drank, and where the late meaſures of adminiſtration were not praiſed.

If I could think that it would avail me any thing, I might perhaps plead that, if I have done miſchief in ſome reſpects, I have done good in others. But with thoſe who have no knowledge beyond that of the politics of the day, and a very ſuperficial knowledge even of them, pounds of merit of any other kind would be outweighed by grains of political, or rather of party demerit. Let a man who is ſuſpected of what any party terms *ſedition* deſerve ever ſo well of his country,

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or of mankind at large, in other reſpects, no more mercy would be ſhewn him on that account, than was ſhewn by Robeſpierre in France. Had I made diſcoveries in ſcience equal to thoſe of Newton, or had had the philanthropy of Howard, they would not have exempted me from the coarſeſt abuſe that the Engliſh language can furniſh. A detected thief or a fraudulent forger of bank bills, would have met with more favour than has been ſhewn to me.

I do not recollect any thing more that I have done with reſpect to the politics of this country ſince I have come into it, except writing a reply to a virulent cenſure of me for holding a correſpondence with a friend in France on occaſion of a letter to me intercepted and publiſhed with notes in England, and republiſhed with additional and more virulent remarks in this country. This reply I publiſhed in ſeveral of your newſpapers, and I believe it gave general ſatisfaction. I ſhall, therefore, ſoon proceed to inform you what I really think of the political ſtate of this country, and I ſhall do it with perfect freedom, but with that coolneſs which I hope is habitual to me. I only wiſh that what I write may be read with the ſame temper. But before I do this I ſhall in my next make ſome farther obſervations concerning the *intercepted Letters*, *abuſive writings* in general, and thoſe which reſpect myſelf in particular.

I am, &c.

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LETTER V.

Of the intercepted Letters, and of the French Revolution.

My Friends and Neighbours.

A GREAT clamour was made ſome time ago about the intercepted letters mentioned in my laſt. It was on that occaſion that I wrote the ſubſtance of theſe *Letters;* but being unwilling, without more urgent cauſe, to appear as a *political writer*, I withheld them from the preſs, and contented myſelf with writing a ſhort advertiſement, merely in anſwer to a charge of being a ſpy in the intereſt of France.

To decline all particular diſcuſſions, I then obſerved, that I was not anſwerable for what any perſon might think proper to write to me. But this buſineſs being again brought before the public, I will freely acknowledge that my friend's letter gave me great pleaſure; and the like I have received from others before and ſince that time, written by the ſame hand, and in the ſame ſpirit, tho' no two men think exactly alike, or would expreſs themſelves in exactly the ſame manner. Mr. Stone, being a younger man, will naturally be more ſanguine, and write with more warmth than I ſhould be diſpoſed to do. But my friends, read the intercepted letters without regarding the *notes* that accompanied the publication, and then ſay what there is in them that can give juſt offence to any American.

Mr. Stone is a perſon who, together with myſelf, earneſtly wiſhed for a reformation of abuſes in the Engliſh government, in order to prevent an entire *revolution*, which we did not think was wanted there. He now ſees, or thinks he ſees, that no ſuch reformation is to be expected; and therefore wiſhes a

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revolution to take place, thinking it to be abſolutely neceſſary for the good of the people. I own that I am now inclined to his opinion. I ſincerely wiſh (if the genuine ſpirit of the original conſtitution connot be revived, which would no doubt be ſtill the beſt for that country) for ſome more radical change than I have hitherto thought neceſſary, tho' I wiſh it may be effected peaceably, and without the interference of any foreign power.

Tho' during the American war it was voted, in the houſe of Commons, that "the power of the "crown had increaſed, was increaſing, and ought to "be diminiſhed;" it is evident that, ſo far from being diminiſhed, it has kept increaſing ſince that time; and how far it may go it is impoſſible to ſay. The forms of the Britiſh conſtitution are ſo far from being any real check on the power of the crown, as in theory they ought to be, that they are the moſt convenient inſtruments of it; the court, as is well known, always commanding a majority in the houſe of Common, and being equally ſure of the ſupport of the Lords in all their meaſures.

Seeing that, for want, as I conceive, of a due repreſentation of the people, a reſpectable claſs of Engliſh citizens are frowned upon, and their ſituation uncomfortable, and hardly ſafe, I ſincerely wiſh them relieved. My correſpondent does the ſame, and moreover expreſſes his ſatisfaction in the progreſs that the *revolutionary ſpirit* is making in other parts of Europe, where it is ſtill more wanted. Now, pray, what offence can this juſtly give in *America*, where a ſimilar revolution has actually taken place, and where the great benefits of it are every day experienced? Why ſhould you take umbrage at other countries following the example that you have ſet them?

Shocked at the enormities which have been committed in France, and which no perſons lament ſo much as the friends of liberty in every country, it

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has become fashionable with many to exclaim against *all revolutions* indiscriminately, and all the *principles* that lead to them; and in the English parliament a wish has been openly expressed for the restoration of the ancient government, and the ancient religion, of France. But, surely, they who hold this language must either be avowed advocates of arbitrary power, or have forgotten the state of France before the last revolution.

No writer whatever expresses a greater dread of every thing tending to revolution than Mr. Robinson, professor of Natural Philosophy in the university of Edinburgh, in his book entitled *Proofs of a conspiracy against all the religions and governments of Europe*, in which he makes me one of those conspirators. But even this writer could not help acknowledging the existence of such abuses in the government of France as were absolutely insupportable, and such as would abundantly justify the subjects of it in attempting its subversion. It may not be amiss to bring before you a part of what this writer says on the subject.

After enumerating all the causes of corruption in government, he says p. 48 "Perhaps there never was "a nation where all these co-operating causes had ac- "quired greater strength than in France. Oppressi- "ons of all kinds were at their height. The luxuries "of life were enjoyed exclusively by the upper classes, "and this in the highest degree of refinement; so that "the desires of the rest were whetted to the utmost. "Religion appeared in its worst form, and seemed "calculated solely for procuring establishments for the "younger sons of an insolent and useless nobless. "The morals of the higher orders of the clergy and "of the laity were equally corrupt.—The whole na- "tion became infidel—The misconduct of administra- "tion, and the abuses of the public treasure, were "every day growing more impudent and glaring, "&c. &c. In fact the king of France was an abso-

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" lute monarch, and the ſubjects were ſlaves." p. 264.
" There is no denying the inſolence and oppreſſion " of the crown, and of the nobles, nor the miſery " and ſlavery of the people; nor that there was ſuffi- " cient provocation for a total change of meaſures " and of principles." p. 301. And is not this the very thing that the French nation, now ſo much execrated, have done? For what, then, are they to be ſo much condemned?

You will obſerve, however, that this writer aſcribes the revolution in France, in a great meaſure, to the example ſet by this country, to which it is ſufficiently evident from his manner of expreſſing himſelf, that he is no friend. " Their officers and ſoldiers, " who returned from America," he ſays, " imported " *American principles*, and in every company found " hearers who liſtened with delight and regret to the " faſcinating tale of American independence." p. 263.

Be aſſured that the enemies of the French revolution are in reality no leſs the enemies of the American, as they both aroſe from the ſame principles. The immediate ſtimulus was oppreſſion, which was unſpeakably greater in France than it was in this country. And if ever monarchy be firmly eſtabliſhed in France, the liberty and independence of America will be in imminent danger. But I have no fear on the ſubject, I rejoice in both revolutions alike*.

If you read any authentic account of the ſtate of

* From the commencement of the American war I wiſhed for the independence of this country, being firmly perſuaded that it would be for the real advantage of England, as well as of theſe States, and this is now, I believe, almoſt univerſally acknowledged to be the caſe. I am equally well perſuaded that it would be for the benefit of the people of England (I do not ſay for the glory of the monarch) to have nothing to do with the dominion of the Eaſt or the Weſt Indies. I once mentioned this opinion to Sir George Savile, adding, that it would have been much better for England never to have had the poſſeſſion of Gibraltar, and that it would be good policy to give it up. He ſaid that he had often thought ſo too, but that the opinion was ſo unpopular that he had not dared to avow it.

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the other European kingdoms (I except, however, Denmark and Sweden) you will be ſatisfied that the abuſes of government, and the oppreſſion of the people, are got to an extreme. Germany has long groaned under the oppreſſion of a haughty nobility, and there have been frequent riſings of the peaſants to better their condition. In the time of Luther more than a hundred thouſand had recourſe to arms in Swabia; but wanting good leaders, and ill provided with ſtores and ammunition, they were ſoon ſuppreſſed. Both Spain and Naples, which are held by the ſame family, have not one half of their ancient inhabitants; and there cannot be a more certain proof of bad government than this. Their condition is little, if at all better than that of the Turkiſh dominions. Portugal, is in much the ſame ſtate.

The late Lord Chatham was fond of foreign poſſeſſions. He was much againſt granting abſolute independence to America, which he ſaid was the faireſt jewel in the crown of the Britiſh monarch, and his opinion had for ſome time great weight with the marquis of Landſdown, then Lord Shelburne. On this Dr. Price, who thought as I did on the ſubject, agreed with me to write our thoughts ſeparately on the ſubject, and preſent them to his Lordſhip. We did ſo. and ſome time after he told me that he had ſhewn my letter to Lord Chatham, but that he was much offended at it. At the concluſion of the war, however, the Marquis made no difficulty of granting what he thought not only neceſſary, but advantageous to his country, of which he was then prime miniſter. Had he continued ſo to this day, his liberal and enlightened policy would have ſaved England, and all Europe, the horrors of the preſent moſt ruinous and impolitic war.

Tho' I did not accept of a ſeat in the conventional aſſembly of France, I had at that time a correſpondence with ſome of the leading men of that country; and believing that my opinion would have ſome weight, I adviſed the abandoning the Weſt Indies, and all their foreign poſſeſſions. The anſwer I received was, that they thought as I did on the ſubject, but that the intereſt of thoſe who were poſſeſſed of property in the iſlands, would prevent their doing it for the preſent. This correſpondence was continued till the death of the king, againſt which I gave my advice; but a concurrence of circumſtances, the principal of which was the influence of the queen, was fatal to that well meaning man. Of what paſſed in France after that event I had no information but from newſpapers. But it ſeems I muſt, notwithſtanding this, be anſwerable for it all.

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Can, then, any perſon, any friend of liberty and humanity, himſelf enjoying the bleſſings of a republican government, wiſh that any part of his ſpecies ſhould continue in this ſtate of degradation and bondage? If not, he muſt partake in the generous feelings of my correſpondent, and earneſtly wiſh for their emancipation. And we may hope that, with the examples of America and France before them, other revolutions may be attended with leſs bloodſhed than thoſe have been.

The revolution of France would, it cannot be doubted, have continued to be as peaceable throughout, as it was at its outſet*, if the king had been content with the limited power of which the firſt conſtitution left him poſſeſſed; and had not this unfortunate prince been ſtimulated by others, more ambitious than himſelf, to recover the power that he had loſt, the war, and the conſequent enormities, had not taken place. To thoſe princes, therefore, and their wicked confederacy, are all the enormities to be aſcribed.

But it appears to have been the intention of Providence to do more for the French nation, and ultimately for all Europe, than they ever thought of doing for themſelves, though by means which men would not be juſtified in having recourſe to. The national aſſembly, and the people of France, meant nothing more than to limit the power of the crown; but God has given them a government purely republican, and repreſentative, like that of America, without any hereditary powers or honours; and the ſame benefit, I doubt not, with my correſpondent, is in-

* At the time of the firſt conſtitution, when France was a limited monarchy, thoſe who took the lead in that country would, to my own knowledge, have given almoſt any thing for the friendſhip and concurrence of England, as, in their opinion, that would have enſured the peace of France, and of all Europe.

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tended for all thoſe countries whoſe kings are at preſent confederated againſt France and univerſal liberty.

If every thing that is *true* and *right* will finally prevail, againſt whatever is *error* and *wrong*, the cauſe of monarchy, always tending to deſpotiſm, cannot be ſupported much longer. Independently of wars, which muſt accelerate the great cataſtrophe, they all contain within themſelves the ſeeds of their own deſtruction. The people acquiring knowledge every day, will not much longer bear what they have done. Nor is it difficult to foreſee that the infatuation of the preſent race of kings, which is remarkably ſimilar to that of Pharaoh, will bring on their deſtruction in the manner predicted in the ſcriptures, viz. with violence, and much conſequent general calamity.

I ſhall on this occaſion obſerve, that it is a manifeſt error with reſpect to true policy in thoſe who wiſh to diſarm ſeditious publications of their ſting, to publiſh themſelves, as they ſometimes do, what appears to them moſt obnoxious in them; thinking to expoſe them, and to render the authors odious; not conſidering to whom they will appear in that light. For while they are read with diſlike, and even horror, by ſome, they may be read with admiration by others. The intercepted Letters, and the paragraphs ſelected from Mr. *Cooper's Addreſs* are caſes in point, as well as ſeveral other articles which have been inſerted in the Federal Newſpapers of this country. The friends of liberty rejoice to ſee ſuch publications through any channel, and eſpecially when it is done at no riſk to themſelves; and without regarding the *comments*, they attend to the *text*.

The ſame wretched politicians alſo do not conſider the natural tendency and effect of the *abuſe* that they throw out againſt the friends of liberty and the rights of man. If it have any effect, which is very queſtionable, it only makes us ſtand ſomething worſe with thoſe with whom it is no object to us to ſtand well

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at all, while it recommends us to all thoſe whoſe good opinion and attachment we really value. What is it to me to be thought ill of by the friends of *Church and king* (with the cry of which my houſe was burned) in England, or by Mr. Cobbet and his readers in this country? My account with them has been long ſettled. I am already a bankrupt in their eſteem, and no new article in the account can alter the balance for or againſt me. My part is taken, and my reputation, as far as it is an object with me, is with men of oppoſite principles, thoſe who are opprobriouſly called democrats, jacobins, and every thing elſe of the kind; and to theſe, and eſpecially thoſe of that claſs in France, this abuſe tends to recommend me.

I am, &c.

LETTER VI.

Of the Style of Abuſe in the writings of Mr. Cobbet, alias Peter Porcupine.

My Friends and Neighbours,

IT is commonly ſaid that when *much dirt is thrown, ſome will ſtick;* and on this principle I ſuppoſe it is that I have been diſtinguiſhed ſo often by my principal antagoniſt Mr. Cobbet, under the ſignature of *Peter Porcupine*. But he appears to me to have ſpoiled his part by overacting it. For men may be ſo covered with dirt that it ſhall not be known who they are,

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nor will they be diſtinguiſhed from one another, like Virgil's *complimentary* epithets, *fortiſque Gyas fortiſque Cloanthus*. Beſides, ſuch coarſe abuſe as is implied in the words *villain, raſcal, ſcoundrel*, &c. &c. with which his writings abound, only marks the low education, and the low character and manners, of the man that uſes them. Such language is never uſed by gentlemen, or ſcholars, nor can they return it, though it were ever ſo well merited; not to ſay that a Chriſtian muſt not return railing for railing. (1. Pet. 3. 9.) With reſpect to them, therefore it is an unfair weapon. It is like throwing ſtreet dirt, which they cannot handle.

It was a thing of courſe that I ſhould be the object of calumny ever ſince I wrote in defence of unpopular truths, and unpopular maxims. Indeed, I queſtion whether any perſon in England (the prime miniſter for the time being excepted) ever had ſo much of what is generally termed *abuſe*, as myſelf. It has been pouring out with very little intermiſſion for more than twenty years, and is continued, I find, in my abſence. My friends, however, ſay that it certainly agrees with me. For tho' I was originally of a weak conſtitution, my health has been improving ever ſince, and I never was ſo well as I have been ſince my arrival in this place, except about three months after my landing, which was before Mr. Cobbet took notice of me. They now ſay that, old as I am, I bid fair to outlive ſome of my younger opponents. That ſarcaſtic writings ſhould have this ſalutary effect, will not be thought ſo extraordinary, when it is conſidered that pepper, muſtard, ſalt, and vinegar, have their uſe in a good dinner, as well as the beef and the pudding. They certainly contribute to a good digeſtion. But there muſt be ſome peculiar charm in Mr. Cobbet's writings, operating unſeen and unknown, for I do not think I have ſeen more than a tenth part of his voluminous publications,

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and in all of them, I doubt not, he has contrived to find a nich for me. I am almoſt as neceſſary to him, and as good a ſubject for him, as the king of England is to Peter Pindar. In England, however, where decency and good manners are rarely violated, my antagoniſts were never of this low claſs. But the laſt of the animals that had a kick at the old lion in the fable was the aſs.

The profuſion and variety of Mr. Cobbet's abuſe argues a peculiar genius of the kind, unequalled by any thing that I have met with before. In the compaſs of only three news-papers, and chiefly in one of them, I am called "a hoary hypocrite, a malignant old Tartuff, "a lurking old *illuminatus*, a poor old wretch, a mi-"ſerable perverſe old man, a perverſe old hypocrite, "and a vindictive, unnatural, hypocritical wretch." I am " of a factious diſpoſition, an apoſtle of ſedition, "a political viper, with a black rancorous heart, and "ſmooth tongued whining cart; a cunning ſectary, an "ambitious ſectary, a baffled ſocinian, and a Jeſuit." I am accuſed of " falſehood and poiſonous malignity, "actuated by cool and premeditated malice." I have "the craft of a ſectary, joined to the hatred and malice "of a fiend. My conduct," he ſays," has been wick-"ed and deteſtable, that I wiſh Great Britain revoluti-"onized, and ruined, and indulge a wicked tho' delu-ſive hope of ſeeing this wiſh accompliſhed; that I "never miſs an opportunity of endeavouring to render "my countrymen the hate and ſcorn of the univerſe, "that for twenty years paſt I have, from hatred to my " native country, ſacrificed my intereſt, my peace, " and my reputation, to the pleaſure of injuring, " inſulting, and ruining it." In conjunction withothers, he calls me "a villain and a ſcoundrel, * and both

* I rather wonder that the term *raſcal* is not applied to me, as it is to others, in this particular paper, as well as *villain* and *ſcoundrel*. It is, I doubt not, frequently enough applied to me in other parts of his writings. But ſuch near relations and companions ought not to have been ſo far ſeparated

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"fool and knave. My buſineſs in this country," he ſys, "is of a nature moſt hoſtile to its happineſs and "independence." It is no wonder, therefore, that he treats me, as he ſays, "with his unqualified con-"tempt."

His pamphlet on the ſubject of my emigration, publiſhed ſoon after my arrival, contains the following among other falſehoods, "I had been," he ſays, "for "many years an avowed and open enemy to the go-"vernment and conſtitution of my country; that in "my inflammatory diſcourſes, called *ſermons*, the Eng-"liſh conſtitution was openly attacked; and that the "doctrines there held forth were ſubverſive of all civil "and religious order;" and in his newſpaper he ſays, "my conventicle at Hackney was a moſt convenient "and ſucceſsful ſchool of treaſon. I entertained," he ſays, "the hope of bringing about a revolution in "England on the French plan, and that I had no ob-"jection to the continuance of tythes in England, "provided I came in for a ſhare."

He ſays that "my public celebration of the French "riots and maſſacres is a convincing proof of my "approving them, and that my ſending my ſon to "Paris in the midſt of them, to requeſt the honour "of becoming a French citizen, is another proof of "the ſame that cannot be diſputed; that I approved "of the unmerciful perſecution of the unfortunate "and worthy part of the French clergy, men as far "ſurpaſſing me in piety and ability, as in ſuffering; "that the French conſtitution is my ſyſtem, and that "ſooner than not ſee it eſtabliſhed, he much queſtions "if I would not with pleaſure ſee the maſſacre of all "the human race." But if all mankind were de-ſtroyed where is this conſtitution of mine to be eſta-bliſhed? As he has not told us where, I muſt ſuppoſe that he meant among bears, wolves, or wild beaſts of ſome kind or other.

With reſpect to the riots in Birmingham, he ſays,

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" that " I was the principal cauſe of them ; that the " feſtival of the commemoration of the French revo- " lution was to celebrate events which were in reality " the ſubject of the deepeſt horror ; that this riot, " conſidered comparatively with what I and my " friends wiſhed to ſtir up, was peace, harmony, and " gentleneſs ; that the magiſtrates uſed every exertion " in their power to quell the riot in its very earlieſt " ſtage ; that had the rioters ſtopped at the deſtruction " of my meeting houſe, all had been well. In what- " ever light," he ſays, " we view the Birmingham " riots, we can ſee no object to excite our compaſſion, " except the inhabitants of the hundred, and the un- " fortunate rioters themſelves ; that the loſs of my " manuſcripts was little more than a few dirty ſheets " of paper, and their deſtruction a benefit, rather than " a loſs, both to myſelf and the country ; that my " philoſophical apparatus was a thing of imaginary " value only, and ought not to be eſtimated at its " coſt, any more than a collection of ſhells, or inſects, " or any other *frivola* of a virtuoſo."

" In this country," he ſays, " there is nothing to " fear from me except my diffeminating my deiſtical " principles." In another place, however, he calls my doctrines *atheiſtical*, tho' it is impoſſible that they can be both ; and he ſpeaks of " the infidel philoſophy of " Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Gibbon, Prieſtley, and the reſt " of that enlightened tribe." To make the group complete (for the *conſiſtency* of it is no object with him) he ſhould have added ſome diſtinguiſhed heathens, and mahometans as holding the ſame opinions. " When I preached in Philadelphia," he ſays, " I gave " up a ſhare of the pence which I was able to draw " out of the pockets of my hearers for the liberty of " preaching in the church of the Univerſaliſts," of which he ſpeaks with the greateſt contempt.

All this, you will obſerve, is mere *aſſertion*, without any *evidence* whatever ; and therefore my ſimple denial

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(tho' I could bring abundant proof of every thing that I ſhall ſay) may be a ſufficient anſwer.

Now I can ſay with truth that, in the courſe of more than forty years, I never preached one ſermon that any of you would have ſaid was *political*; nor did I ever, in any place, or in any form, expreſs a wiſh for any material change in the Engliſh conſtitution; and I am confident I have a more ſincere reſpect for my native country, and for this too, than Mr. Cobbet has for any country. My writings ſhew that I was always an enemy of all civil eſtabliſhments of religion, but thought that if there was to be one, it ſhould be of *Chriſtianity in general*, ſuch as exiſts in the New-England ſtates; and then that the church revenues, whatever they were, ſhould be given to all the ſects alike.

When I preached at the church of the Univerſaliſts, I wiſhed to have no collection made after ſervice, but all that was collected was given to the miniſter of the place; and when I preached in the hall of the univerſity, only one collection was made to defray the expences that had been incurred. I was glad of the opportunity of doing what I thought to be *good* without any pecuniary benefit. Whether the diſcourſes that I delivered were calculated to do any good, thoſe who read them may judge.

My ſon went to France before the revolution took place, and before any ſuch thing was expected; nor was any requeſt ever made by myſelf, or my friends, to be made a French citizen. The ſecond time that he went was in order to be received into the houſe of a merchant at Nantes, from which place, on account of the troubles in that neighbourhood, he removed to this country.

When the anniverſary of the French revolution was celebrated at Birmingham, the conſtitution of France was a limited monarchy, very much like that of England, and had been ſolemnly accepted by the king himſelf. Tho' I approved of that celebration, I neither

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projected, nor attended it. The magiſtrates made no ſerious attempts to quell the riot, but rather promoted it*. Of the amount of my loſſes on that occaſion I have nothing to add to what will be found in my *Appeal to the people of England* on the ſubject. In a pecuniary computation it was more than two thouſand pounds leſs than the real value.

This groſs abuſe comes from a man with whom I never had any intercourſe, whom I never offended, or irritated by any reply to his invectives, which have never ceaſed ſince I have been in the country; nor ſhould I have noticed them now, but that I find his publications have increaſing acceptance and celebrity with the friends of thoſe who have the chief power in this country; ſo that ſince the riot in Birmingham is openly approved and praiſed by him and his ſupporters, a ſimilar one may be apprehended here, eſpecially if what Mr. Cobbet ſays be true (and I ſee no reaſon to queſtion it) that "he has lived to ſee the "truth of his ſtatements, and the juſtice of his opini-"ons, reſpecting me fully and univerſally acknow-"ledged;" and ſince a ſpirit of party runs as high in this country as I ever knew it to do in England. If you believe one half of what Mr. Cobbet ſays of me, you would be juſtified, and applauded, for deſtroying me, as you would for killing a ſerpent or a wild beaſt.

Having advanced thus much in my vindication, I ſhall probably bear in ſilence (as I have hitherto done with reſpect to what is paſt) whatever farther abuſe I may be expoſed to. What other terms of reproach the Engliſh language can furniſh I am ignorant of, but I ſhall expect very ſoon to find; if not, that more curious changes will be rung on thoſe that have been ſo often uſed already, and eſpecially his three favourite

* I have been very credibly informed that Lady Aylesford, wife of the Lord Lieutenant of the county, converſing on the ſubject of the riots, ſaid "They went farther than we intended."

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words, *raſcal villain* and *ſcoundrel.* Theſe have been ſo much uſed by him, that I imagine his printer muſt provide freſh types for the letters of which they conſiſt.

If any freſh accuſation be advanced, it muſt be that I was ſent hither as a convict, for theft or robbery on the high way; but that, being favoured, I was permitted to export myſelf to America, rather than be ſent to my friends and old companions at Botany bay; it being thought that there were already dangerous perſons enow in that one place. And there will be juſt as much truth in this, as in any thing that has yet been advanced againſt me by Mr. Cobbet.*

As a part of the general plan of that providence which overrules all things. I am far from complaining of the treatment I have met with in England, or in this country; eſpecially as it has almoſt always attended the greateſt merit, and we cannot expect to have any commodity without the tax that is laid upon it by the laws of nature. In a ſyſtem in which infinite wiſdom and infinite goodneſs are equally apparent, nothing can eventually be wrong: and toads and vipers are as neceſſary in the ſyſtem as horſes and ſheep; and noxious plants as much as wholeſome herbs.

* Mr. Cobbet's ſucceſſors have a full portion of his ſpirit but without his ability. I preſerve ſome ſpecimens of their writings, eſpecially the *Preſpectus of the Gazette of the United States, for the country*, in order to convince my philoſophical friends in Europe, that, contrary to the hypotheſis of ſome of them, European productions, vegetable, animal, or intellectual, do not degenerate in this weſtern world. At leaſt nothing of equal party violence and abſurdity ever fell under my obſervation before. According to this writer, the adminiſtration of Mr. Jefferſon and Mr. Burr, will be conducted on the principles of *Jacobiniſm* which tho' he does not define, he gives us ſufficiently to underſtand is a complication of all evils natural and moral, ſomething worſe than war, famine, and peſtilence united. But happily, all theſe things, like moſt others of a noxious nature, carry their own antidote along with them. It may even be ſafely predicted of their publications as it was of Porcupine's Gazette, that it will be eventually among the beſt friends of the cauſe of republicaniſm.

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I ſhall conclude this letter with obſerving that whatever I may think of the Engliſh government; I have ſuch an opinion of the liberality, the good ſenſe, and the good taſte, of my countrymen, that I do not believe that any ſuch a newſpaper as that of *Peter Porcupine* would meet with any encouragement among the warmeſt friends of *Church and king* in England.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

Of my Religion.

My Friends and Neighbours,

MR. COBBET calls me ſometimes an *unitarian* ſometimes a *deiſt*, ſometimes an *atheiſt*, and always a *hypocrite*. And a great hypocrite I muſt, indeed be, if, in reality, I do not believe in the being of a God, or in the truth of chriſtianity, when I have written more in defence of thoſe articles of faith than any other man now living, or almoſt that ever did live,* and have officiated as a chriſtian miniſter more than forty years.

I muſt alſo have a greater want of common ſenſe than he aſcribes to me, to maintain opinions ſo inconſiſtent with one another as thoſe above mentioned. An atheiſt acknowledges no God, and no future ſtate;

* I can only recollect one perſon who has written more in defence of Chriſtianity than myſelf, and that was an Unitarian. I mean Dr. Lardner, with whom I had the happineſs to be acquainted, and who in conjunction with Dr. Fleming, was the publiſher of the firſt of my theological writings.

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deiſts acknowledge the former but few of them the latter, and they believe in no revalation; whereas unitarians deny, indeed, a trinity in God, but they believe in one God, the Father, and in the divine miſſion of Chriſt. They believed that he worked miracles by the power of God, that God raiſed him from the dead, and that he will come again to raiſe all the dead, and judge all the world. The ſame man connot, therefore, be at the ſame time an *atheiſt*, a *deiſt*, and, an *unitarian*.

If I be a *hypocrite*, in pretending only to be no atheiſt, or deiſt, while, in reality, I am either the one or the other, what have I got by my hypocriſy; when tho' I have been a preacher, as I have obſerved, more than forty years, my profeſſion has never yielded me half a maintenance? and here I get nothing at all by it. Men are not at the trouble of acting the hypocrite, and eſpecially for a long time, for nothing.

It is true that I do not join in the public worſhip of this place; but it is becauſe I cannot join in your devotions, which are altogether trinitarian, as they ought to be while you are trinitarians. For it would be abſurd to acknowledge Chriſt to be God, and not to render him the honours of divinity, by praying to him as an omnipreſent and and omnipotent being, the maker and conſtant preſerver of all things. But though I do not worſhip with you, I have divine ſervice every Lord's day in my own houſe, which is then open to every body, and where ſeveral of you occaſionally attend*. Now did any of you ever hear me preach any thing like atheiſm, or deiſm, or indeed any thing contrary to your own opinions? And when you have heard me *pray*, could you not join with me in every word I ſaid? If you be Chriſtians at all, I am confident you always might. It never was my

* I have ſince this was written performed divine ſervice in a ſchool room, not far from my houſe.

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cuſtom to preach on the controverted ſubjects of religion, or only on particular occaſions. Theſe I diſcuſs in my publications, in which you may ſee what my opinions on thoſe ſubjects are, and the arguments I have to advance in ſupport of them.

Had I been permitted to officiate in either of your meeting houſes (which I ſhould have done *gratis*, thankful for ſuch an opportunity of being uſeful among you) you would never have heard from me any thing but the principles of our *common chriſtianity*. And this will furniſh topics of diſcourſe in great abundance, and ſuch as are of far greater importance than all the things about which we differ. The ſubſtantial duties of the chriſtian life, to inculcate which is, or ought to be, the great end of all our preaching, are the ſame on all our principles; and do I in my preaching (and I hope I may add in my practice) contradict any of theſe?

We all agree in acknowledging the ſame books of ſcripture, and we profeſs to derive our faith from them, though we interpret them differently. This, ſurely, is not atheiſm, or deiſm. If I do not believe the divinity of Chriſt, it is becauſe I do not believe it to be the doctrine of the ſcriptures, and becauſe I cannot help thinking that if Chriſt, and alſo the Holy Spirit, be poſſeſſed of all the attributes of divinity, equally with God the Father, there muſt be *three Gods*, and not *one only*, which the ſcriptures aſſert, and on which they lay the greateſt ſtreſs. In this you will not agree with me; being of opinion that, in ſome ſenſe or other, *three* may be *one*, and *one three*. But you will not ſay that becauſe I am not a trinitarian, I am an atheiſt, or a deiſt.

You do not call the Jews atheiſts or deiſts, becauſe they do not believe the divinity of Moſes, or of the Meſſiah whom they expect. They believe that Moſes delivered to them the laws and commands of God; and therefore they reſpect them as much as if they

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had all come from the mouth of God himſelf. I do the ſame with reſpect to all that Chriſt, ſpeaking in the name of God, has delivered to us. He has repeatedly ſaid (John vii. 16, xiv. 24,) that *the words which he ſpake were not his own but the Father's who ſent him;* that *the Father who was in him*, or with him, *worked the miracles* which proved his divine miſſion (John xiv, 10) for that *of himſelf he could do nothing* (John v. 30.) The apoſtle Peter calls Chriſt *a man approved of God by ſigns and wonders which God did by him*, Acts ii. 21, and the apoſtle Paul ſays, (1. Cor. viii. 6. *i* Tim. ii. v.) *To us there is one God, the Father, and one mediator between God and men, the man Chriſt Jeſus.*

But tho' I think the clear ſenſe of ſcripture, ſuch as is intelligible to the meaneſt capacity, is on my ſide, I can eaſily ſuppoſe that you ſee things in a very different light, and that you are as conſcientious in differing from me, as I am in differing from you. I, no doubt, wiſh that you could come to think as I do on theſe ſubjects, as you do with reſpect to me. This is unavoidable in us both, if we lay any ſtreſs on our opinions, and have any good will for one another. But I do not obtrude my opinions upon you, or offend you with diſputation. Few of you have ever heard me mention the ſubject of our differences with reſpect to religion, and then the occaſion has never been ſought by me. I do not condemn thoſe who act otherwiſe, but my habits are different; and tho' I have no leſs zeal, I take a different method of propagating my principles. I have ſeldom ſeen any good produced by diſputing in converſation. It too often tends to irritate, and tho' men are often ſilenced in this way, they are ſeldom convinced. But becauſe I am not always talking about religion, do you ſuppoſe, with Mr. Cobbet, that I have none?

Mr. Adams, your Preſident, is unqueſtionably a religious man, and on this account, as well as on many others, I greatly reſpect him. He knows me well;

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and do you think he would have attended me conſtantly, as he did, when I delivered my firſt ſet of Diſcourſes in Philadelphia, and have conſented that I ſhould dedicate them to him, if he had known, or ſuſpected, me to be an atheiſt or deiſt, and conſequently a hypocrite. He entertains no doubt of my being a ſincere chriſtian, tho' our opinions may not be exactly the ſame.

I wiſh we had all more religion than we have. We ſhould then think more of another world, and make leſs account of this, and of all things in it, than we now do. It would give us an habitual regard to God, and his providence, reſpecting both individuals and ſocieties of mankind, and eſpecially the great and intereſting events which are now taking place in the old world. Firmly believing that a wiſe and good providence ſuperintends all events, and will bring good out of all evil, ſo that the final iſſue of the moſt calamitous events will be glorious and happy, we ſhall view them as they paſs before us not without intereſt, but with more tranquility, and without ill will towards any part of the human race, even our perſonal or national enemies.

Whatever you my think in the prime of life, while your ſpirits are high, and your proſpects good, the value of religion at my time of life is beyond all eſtimation. Without ſuch proſpects as religion ſets before us the evening of life would be cheerleſs and gloomy, but with them it is moſt ſerene and happy; far more ſo than any preceding period. I am far, I aſſure you, from wiſhing to be young again, tho I enjoyed that part of life as much as any of you can do.

On this account I regard unbelievers at the cloſe of life with much compaſſion. And late converts, and nominal chriſtians, who give little attention to the ſubject, are not much better. It requires *time* before the principles of chriſtianity can be of much uſe in this reſpect. An habitual attention muſt be given to them,

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ſo that in every intermiſſion of neceſſary buſineſs they ſhall, even without any effort, be uppermoſt in a man's thoughts, affording relief under all his troubles and cares. This ſtate of mind cannot, in the natural courſe of things, be acquired in a ſhort time. In this reſpect *faith* is a different thing from mere *conviction*, and admits of degrees, giving conſolation and joy in proportion to its ſtrength.

Atheiſt or deiſt as I may be conſidered, and attached as I am to philoſophical purſuits, my chief ſatisfactions are derived from the daily ſtudy of the ſcriptures, and reflections on the momentous ſubjects that are there propoſed to us. Religion is the only effectual ſupport under all the troubles of life (and in ſaying this you know that I *may* ſpeak from experience) as well as in the hour of death. It alſo tends to make men leſs ambitious, and to allay the heat of party ſpirit, which is too often the bane of good neighbourhood, and ſeparates thoſe who would otherwiſe be happy in a pleaſing and beneficial intercourſe. If nations, or their governors, were really chriſtians, all mankind would live in peace and friendſhip with one another.

Call this a *ſermon*, if you pleaſe, and let Mr. Cobbet call it *cant and hypocriſy*. Only believe me to be, notwithſtanding every difference of opinion, religious or political.

My Friends and Neighbours,

your ſincere well- wiſher,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland, Nov. 1. 1799.

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P. S. In my next Letters* I ſhall, according to my promiſe, proceed to inform you what I *think* with reſpect to the conduct of your adminiſtration, and even the conſtitution itſelf. But as theſe are ſerious and deep ſubjects, they require to be treated with much caution. And theſe being tickliſh times, it may be prudent to have a conſultation of my lawyers on the buſineſs. Poor as is the *ſhed* which Mr. Cobbet ſays I dignify with the name of a *houſe*, I ſhould be ſorry to exchange it for ſuch lodgings as the liberality of this country aſſigned to Mr. Lyon, tho' this might gratify Mr. Cobbet as much as my having a place in the poor houſe in Philadelphia.

SINCE this Poſtcript was ſent to the preſs the following article, reflecting on Mr. Cooper and myſelf, has appeared in the *Reading Newſpaper* of October 26, 1799.

"*Thomas Cooper's* addreſs to the readers of the Sun-
"bury and Northumberland Gazette, of which he
"was Editor, having been republiſhed in this State,
"with an introduction approbatory of the piece, a
"correſpondent wiſhes to know if it be the ſame *Tho-*
"*mas Cooper*, an Engliſhman, of whom the following
"anecdote is related? If it is, every paper devoted to
"truth, honor and decency, ought to give it a thorough
"circulation."

"Not many months ago, it is ſaid, a *Mr. Cooper*, an Engliſhman, applied to the PRESIDENT of the Uni-
"ted States to be appointed "agent for ſettling the
"reſpective claimes of the citizens and ſubjects of
"this country and Great Britain." In his letter he
"informs the PRESIDENT that alth ough he (*Thomas*
"*Cooper*) had been called a Democrat, yet his real po-
"litical ſentiments were ſuch as would be agreeable

*This publication was originally in two parts, and the firſt of them cloſed with the 7th letter. The 8th letter and the following were publiſhed about a month after.

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" to the PRESIDENT and government of the United " States, or expreſſions to that effect. This letter " was accompanied with another from Dr. *Joſeph* " *Prieſtléy*, who did not fail to aſſure the PRESIDENT, " of the pliability of his friend *Cooper's* democratic " principles. The PRESIDENT, it is ſaid, rejected *Coo-* " *per's* application with diſdain, and *Prieſtley's* with ſtill " ſtronger marks of ſurpriſe, ſaying, it is ſaid, as he " threw the letter on the table, does he think that I " would appoint any Engliſhman to that important " office in preference to an American!—What was " the conſequence?—When *Thomas Cooper* found his " application for a lucrative office under our PRESI- " DENT rejected, he writes in revenge the addreſs which " has appeared in print, and Dr. *Prieſtley* exerted his " influence in diſperſing this very addreſs, which he " muſt know was the offspring of diſappointment " and revenge!!!"

" The addreſs is as cunning and inſidious a produc- " tion as ever appeared in the Aurora, or the old Chro- " nicle, and as for impudence it exceeds, or at leaſt " equals Porcupine himſelf.—*Prieſtley* and *Cooper* are " both called upon to deny the above narrative. A " recourſe to the letters themſelves would eſtabliſh the " accuracy of this anecdote even to a ſyllable.

Of the candour and juſtice of this repreſentation my reader will judge from the tenor of the letters referred to, of which the following are copies.

Auguſt 12, 1797.

DEAR SIR,

IT was far from being my intention, or my wiſh, to trouble you with a requeſt of any favours, though it

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is *now* in your power to grant them; and it is not at all probable that I ſhall ever take a ſecond liberty of the kind. But circumſtances have ariſen which, I think, call upon me to do it once, though not for myſelf but a friend. The office of Agent for American claims, was offered, I underſtand, to Mr. Hall of Sunbury, and he has declined it. If this be the caſe, and no other perſon be yet fixed upon, I ſhould be very happy if I could ſerve Mr. Cooper (a man, I doubt not, of at leaſt equal ability, and poſſeſſed of every other qualification for the office) by recommending him. It is true that both he and myſelf fall, in the language of our calumniators, under the deſcription of *Democrats*, who are ſtudiouſly repreſented as enemies to what is called *government* both in England and here. What *I* have done to deſerve that character you well know, and Mr. Cooper has done very little more. In fact, we have both been perſecuted for being friends to American liberty, and our preference of the government of this country has brought us both hither. However, were the accuſation true, I think the appointment of a man of unqueſtionable ability and fidelity to his truſt, for which I would make myſelf anſwerable, would be ſuch a mark of ſuperiority to popular prejudice as I ſhould expect from you. *I therefore think it no unfavourable circumſtance in the recommendation.* That you will act according to your beſt judgment I have no doubt, with reſpect to this and other affairs of infinitely more moment, through which I am perſuaded you will bring the country with reputation to yourſelf, though, (in circumſtances of ſuch uncommon difficulty) perhaps with leſs eaſe and ſatisfaction than I could wiſh. With my earneſt wiſhes for the honour and tranquility of your Preſidency,

I am, Dear Sir,
yours ſincerely,
JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

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SIR,

ON my expreſſing an inclination for the office which Mr. Hall has declined, Dr. Prieſtley was ſo good as to offer his ſervices with you on my behalf.

Probably the office will be filled 'ere this letter can reach you: probably there may be objections to nominating a perſon not a native of this country: probably *the objection mentioned by Dr. Prieſtley may reaſonably be deemed of weight in my inſtance.* Be all this as it may, I ſee no impropriety in the preſent application to be appointed Agent of American claims, for it is ſtill poſſible I may ſuppoſe more weight in the objections than they will be found to deſerve. If it ſhould ſo happen that I am nominated to that office I ſhall endeavour to merit the character the Doctor has given of me, and your eſteem.

I am, &c.

THOMAS COOPER.

From my letter it will clearly appear that I was far from propoſing any derilection of principles on the part of Mr. Cooper. I ſhould as ſoon have expected it on the part of Mr. Adams himſelf. I was alſo far from intending any affront to Mr. Adams, for whom I always had a very high eſteem. I honoured him for his integrity, and reſpected even what I thought to be his prejudices. Beſides he was juſt then entered on his office of Preſident, and had not done any thing to offend perſons of Mr. Cooper's political principles.

I thought Mr. Cooper ſingularly well qualified for diſcharging the duties of the office in queſtion, on account of his knowledge of Engliſh law and Engliſh commerce, as well as for his acknowledged ability and

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activity. I alſo thought that I was giving Mr. Adams an opportunity of ſerving himſelf, by ſhewing his liberality, in favouring a perſon whoſe political principles differed from his own, but in a caſe in which they could not interfere with them. At the ſame time he would have obliged a perſon for whom he always profeſſed much eſteem, and whom he had honoured with his correſpondence and intercourſe.

As Mr. Cooper was, together with my ſon, introduced to Mr. Adams by a letter from me, who was then in England, he ſhould, I think, high as his ſtation was, have interpoſed to prevent ſo ſhocking a miſrepreſentation of our letters to him. If we had not had copies of them, we ſhould both have been diſgraced, and Mr. Cooper, I may ſay, ruined, his livelihood depending upon his character. And ſurely if under ſuch a provocation a few intemperate expreſſions dropped from a man whoſe feelings may be ſomething too quick, they ſhould have been overlooked. Yet for what Mr. Cooper ſaid on that occaſion, he was ſentenced to an impriſonment of ſix months, and to pay a fine of four hundred dollars. And tho' it was in his power to prove the truth of all his allegations, he was not allowed the uſe of ſuch documents from the public offices as would have been abundantly ſufficient for his purpoſe; nor was Mr. Adams allowed to be ſubpœned. This, however, I think is obviouſly due to any citizen, eſpecially when his life or his liberty is in danger.

The following obſervations on the general ſubject of *appointment to offices*, which I wrote ſome time ago, will not, I flatter myſelf, be thought improperly ſubjoined here, and may recommend themſelves as of ſome importance to impartial perſons of all parties. Let the Preſident in queſtion be either Mr. Adams or Mr. Jefferſon.

To have the higher officers of the ſtate, thoſe with whom it may be proper to conſult on the general con-

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duct of affairs, as the heads of the ſeveral departments, men of the ſame political principles with the Preſident, could not be complained of. But when *all* offices, even ſuch as are merely lucrative, are confined to one party, it naturally exaſperates thoſe of oppoſite principles, and greatly promotes a ſpirit of party in the country; and this may proceed ſo far as to hazard a civil war. It is, therefore, the part of good policy, as well as of magnanimity, to diſtribute all offices with as equal a hand as poſſible. Otherwiſe, inſtead of being the chief of the nation, a Preſident makes himſelf the head of a particular party.

Should all the partiſans of ſuch a Preſident follow his example, and employ no phyſician, no carpenter, no maſon, no ſhoemaker, &c. but men of their own political ſentiments; and ſhould thoſe of oppoſite principles, in ſelf defence, do the ſame, it would be a ſtate of mutual perſecution on account of opinion, an endeavour to exterminate one another by ſtarving, which approaches very nearly to an attempt to effect the ſame by violence. The only difference is that of taking a town by blockade, or by ſtorm. They are alike operations of *open war*. A Preſident, therefore, who wiſhes to promote the peace of the country will carefully avoid ſetting ſuch an example.

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LETTER VIII.

Of the Innocence and Advantage of the free Diſcuſſion of all political Subjects.

My Friends and Neighbours,

HAVING promiſed you a full confeſſion of all my political crimes and miſdemeanors, and having in the preceding Letters made a faithful declaration of what *I am*, and what I have *done* among you, I proceed to give you ſome of my *thoughts*, and though you might, in ſome meaſure, have gueſſed at them through the medium of my actions, I will ſave you that trouble, and tell you more of my thoughts than any knowledge you have of my actions could poſſibly have enabled the moſt ſagacious of you to diſcover. But in order to do this fairly and honeſtly, you muſt excuſe me, if, after ſpeaking of my own faults, I touch a little upon yours, though I ſhall do this with as gentle a hand as poſſible.

You muſt, however, conſider, that though I may point out what appears to me to be a fault, you will of courſe, be the judges in your own cauſe, and acknowledge it or not as you may ſee reaſon; and alſo that it is not in my power, but altogether in yours, to find the proper remedy. As a ſenſible Pope ſaid to ſome Engliſhmen who were introduced to him, when he unexpectedly gave them his benediction in the uſual form at parting, "The bleſſing of an old "man can do you no harm;" ſo the advice of an old man, as I am, however improper, or impertinent, cannot hurt you. My trouble in writing is not much, and yours in reading is ſtill leſs.

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Presuming, as I hope I may, that, after the apology I have made for writing these Letters, you will not think it impertinent in me, though an *alien*, to give you my thoughts on any subject relating to the conduct of public affairs (in which I am as much interested as any of you can be) I shall take the liberty to request more of your attention to some particular articles, than you seem to me to have given to them. I may also plead that this is the only way in which I can contribute to the redress of any grievance of which I may think I see cause to complain. For, being an alien, I am neither eligible to any office of trust myself, nor have I a vote for any candidate. But the lowest servant in a family, if he think that any thing is going wrong, may speak of it to any of his fellow servants, even to the steward, or to the master himself, whether they will attend to him or not.

Nothing, however, is more common with the friends of the administration in all countries than to consider every censure of *public measures* as an attack upon the *government* of the country, and every censure of the government as a thing hostile to *the people*. But it is without any good reason in either of the cases. Will it be pretended that all magistrates, and all ministers of state, are infallible, or impeccable? If not, they may mistake the interest of the country, or consult their own interest at its expence. May not, then, a person who thinks them to be either mistaken, or dishonest, and that the people at large are in danger of being injured by their conduct, point it out to his countrymen? Nay, is it not the absolute duty of every honest man to give to others the information that he has acquired himself? According to the principles of your constitution, all persons intrusted with the conduct of public affairs, how high soever you have placed them, are but your *servants*, and accountable to you for their conduct in office.

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Farther, if any perſon ſhould conceive that any thing in the very conſtitution of the government itſelf might be changed for the better, is he an enemy to *the people* for propoſing it? It is only giving his opinion concerning what he imagines will be for their good. Tho' he be miſtaken, his intention may be the beſt in the world, and therefore he will be intitled to their thanks.

If I were to adviſe you to change the whole form of your govenment, from a republic to an abſolute monarchy, I ſhould do you no harm, ſince you would be at liberty to receive or reject the propoſal as you thought proper. I might ſay that a Preſident like yours would make a poor appearance in the preſence of a *king*, that kingly government has both more *dignity* and more *energy* than yours; that ſuch a man as the late king of Pruſſia, or Peter the Great of Ruſſia, would preſently rid you of all traitorous and ſeditious perſons, without troubling your courts of juſtice with them, which would be a great ſaving of expence; that ſuch a government would keep all the country perfectly quiet; that then the lower orders of the people, having nothing to do with politics, would attend to their proper buſineſs, of agriculture, manufactures, or commerce, without diſtraction, and their affairs would proſper in proportion; and that thoſe of the higher orders, the more opulent, not being obliged to give any part of their time to the ſtudy of the theory of government, would have more leiſure to attend to the improvement of the polite arts and ſcience, to the glory of the monarch in the firſt place, and their own reputation in the ſecond.

But if, notwithſtanding all that I could urge in favour of ſuch a government, you ſhould prefer what you call *liberty*, in which perſons of all ranks, qualified or unqualified, give the greateſt part of their time to a ſubject which they will never underſtand, and ſtill chuſe to clamour, and almoſt fight, about endleſs

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elections of magiſtrates, no harm would be done. You might proceed juſt as you had done before.

If, in order to prevent the miſchief that often ariſes from *competition*, I ſhould adviſe that, inſtead of making a king of any native American, who would not ſoon acquire the proper diſpoſition and habits of one, you ſhould return to your former allegiance to the king of Great Britain, a king ready formed to your hands, who would, no doubt, forgive all that was paſt, and promiſe you the beſt treatment for the future, and thus become a wing of that great empire which now commands the world, and ſhare in the honour of exterminating all Jacobiniſm, democracy, anarchy, and irreligion (all of which are now only conſidered as different names of the ſame thing) and you ſhould not quite like the propoſal, I ſhould ſtill hope to be excuſed for making it, from my loyalty to my natural ſovereign, and my zeal for the honour of my native country, even if I did not conſult your intereſt in it; and as you would not be hurt, you could not be much offended.

Mr. Cobbet, a greater admirer of Englad than I am, would, no doubt, go farther than I could in its commendation. He might ſay that, could you but ſee the king of Great Britain in his ſtate coach, drawn by eight cream coloured horſes, with all his horſe guards, ſurrounded by perhaps a hundred thouſand admiring ſpectators, in his progreſs tho' St. James's park, and after that ſee him ſeated in his robes on the throne in the houſe of Lords, with all the Lords and Biſhops in their robes; could you ſee him ſerved on the knee, and perſons kiſſing his hand, you would be aſhamed of your Preſident, and every thing belonging to him. He might ſay that an American would be ſtruck dumb at the ſight of an Engliſh judge ſeated in his ſcarlet robe on the bench, with all the lawyers in their gowns, and flowing wigs. He would ſay that the beſt man among you was hardly fit to be made a juſtice of the peace in

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England. And then what is your *navy?* It is not ſo much as the *frog* compared to the *ox* in the fable; and might bid you take care leſt the ox ſhould ſet his foot upon it.

But ſhould you conſider all this as mere prejudice in favour of our native country, and think there was more ſhew than ſubſtance in kingly governments, that armies and navies coſt more than they are worth, and that you could employ your funds to more advantage, you would only ſmile at our repreſentations, and not be angry.

To be perfectly ſerious: in all countries, and under every form of government, *opinions* of every kind, and thoſe of all perſons, natives or aliens, in office or out of office, ſhould be perfectly free: becauſe they can do no harm; tho' *overt acts*, tending to the forcible ſubverſion of any government, ſhould be watched with the greateſt care.

A perſon may even be ſafely truſted with the adminiſtration of the affairs of a country the conſtitution of whoſe government he does not approve. Admitting, for inſtance, what is commonly ſuppoſed, and is not altogether improbable, that Mr. Adams, the Preſident, ſhould think an *hereditary monarchy* preferable to an *elected Executive*, like that of this country; being of opinion that ſuch a form of government is more favourable to the peace and happineſs of the people; yet, yielding, as every man muſt do, to the opinion of the majority of his fellow citizens, and dreading, as all wiſe men will, the hazard of any great change, or revolution, in the government, he may faithfully adminiſter that which he has ſworn to maintain; and I have no doubt, but that whatever may be his private opinion on the ſubject, he will do it to the beſt of his ability.

All that we have to apprehend in ſuch a caſe is from the opinions of perſons in high offices becoming general; and it is, doubtleſs, much in their power to re-

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commend their opinions to general acceptance. But even then, if the people at large really approve of the change propoſed, the propoſer will be entitled to their gratitude for bringing it about. Nothing is to be dreaded but *violence*, which we need not fear will ever be attempted in this country. Let every thing, eſpecially things of importance, be propoſed to free diſcuſſion, and let *truth* and *error* have equal advantage. The former cannot fail to recommend itſelf to univerſal acceptance in due time, and the latter will be univerſally exploded.

I am, &c.

LETTER IX.

Of Improvements in the Conſtitution of the United States.

My Friends and Neighbours,

MY object in this Letter is not to criticiſe the whole of your conſtitution, or to dwell on the general excellence of it. I think it the beſt that has ever been deviſed by man, and reduced to practice, in any age, or in any part, of the world. It has every thing that is valuable in the Engliſh conſtitution, which was confeſſedly ſuperior to any other in Europe, without its defects. Without this perſuaſion I ſhould not have come among you. But no work of man can be expected to be perfect; and therefore you will not, I hope, be offended if I mention two or three particulars, with reſpect to which I think it might be improved.

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Of this, however, you will judge for yourſelves. The mere opinion of any perſon, and eſpecially that of an alien, cannot do you any harm.

1. If then, I may take the liberty to cenſure any article in your conſtitution, the firſt that I ſhould notice would be that which allows of the eligibility of any man to the office of Preſident for life. Hiſtory abundantly ſhews that the love of power is as great as that of money. The more men have of either, the more they generally wiſh to have. It being poſſible, then, by your conſtitution, for a man to keep this high ſituation for life, by being elected into it every four years, he has an intereſt in enlarging the power attached to it; and if ambition be his object (and pure patriotiſm, I fear, exiſts only in Utopia) he will uſe every means that his ſituation gives him, which will neceſſarily be great, to gain friends; eſpecially by giving offices of truſt and emolument under him, not to thoſe who are the beſt qualified to diſcharge the duties of them, but to thoſe who will ſecond his views of continuing in power. And they who are thus favoured by him will naturally concur in promoting his intereſt, becauſe it will lay him under an additional obligation to promote theirs.

On the contrary, if the conſtitution was ſuch as that no perſon could enjoy an office of ſuch power as that of the Preſident longer than three or four years, and he was not eligible to it again, or not till after a conſiderable diſtance of time, it would not be his intereſt to make friends at the expence of his country, and he would not wiſh to enlarge a power to which he muſt himſelf ſoon be, and remain, ſubject.

Whatever may be objected to the conſtitution of France in other reſpects, in this it is preferable to that of this country. Since each of the five directors, beſides having only one fifth part of the power of your Preſident, muſt be reduced to the rank of a common citizen in five years, the temptation he is under to ex-

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tend his power is much leſs. This advantage, however, is probably more than balanced by the want of union, and conſequently of energy, in ſuch a divided executive.

It will be ſaid that the longer any perſon in the executive offices of government continues in power, the more ſtable and uniform the meaſures of government will be; whereas frequent changes will be attended with endleſs fluctuations, ſo that foreign powers will never know what to look to.

But this inconvenience, for ſuch it is acknowledged to be, only takes place when the perſon poſſeſſed of this power has no will but his own to follow, as in governments that are arbitrary, like that of Ruſſia. This empire has ſeldom changed its head without a total change of its politics. Peter III found his country at war with the king of Pruſſia, and inſtantly became his ally. This alliance the empreſs, who ſoon ſucceeded him, changed into a ſtate of neutrality, and if ſhe had pleaſed, it might have been hoſtility again.

What can be more changeable than the meaſures of the ſame arbitrary court, directed by the caprices of different courtiers and favourites? Dumouriez ſays that thoſe of the court of Verſailles, in his time, varied with every change of miniſters, of factions, of miſtreſſes, or of favourites. See his *Life*, vol. 2, p. 85.

But the leaders of a government truly republican, like that of the United States, will, and muſt, take their meaſures from the wiſhes of the people, which are not ſo apt to change, becauſe they flow from the general intereſt. The annual change of the Roman conſuls never occaſioned any change in the meaſures of government, nor did the annual election of Doges at Venice or Genoa.

It will alſo be ſaid that if the people really prefer any particular Preſident to any other, they ought to be gratified, and not be under a neceſſity of changing him. But in a country of ſuch an extent as that of

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the United States of America, there muſt, ſurely, be more than one perſon whom the people will think ſufficiently qualified to ſerve them, and in whom they can ſafely place confidence: and this ſmall reſtriction of their choice will be abundantly compenſated by putting it out of the power, or inclination, of any Preſident to conſult his own intereſt at the expence of theirs.

If you read any hiſtory, you will find that an attachment to particular perſons has been the occaſion of unſpeakable miſchief in all countries. Though ſome inconvenience aroſe from the Romans having annual conſuls, and annual generals, it was found to be trifling compared with thoſe which were the conſequence of the attachment the ſoldiers acquired for ſuch men as Marius and Sylla, Cæſar and Pompey, who were ſuffered to continue many years in the command of the ſame armies. It was the true cauſe of that ſucceſſion of dreadful civil wars, which did not end but with the total ſubverſion of the republican form of government, and the eſtabliſhment of one that was purely military and deſpotic.

3. In my *Lectures on Hiſtory and General Policy*, Vol 1. p. 65, I obſerved, that "it is a manifeſt abſurdity to "have any more than one will in any ſtate; becauſe "when any part of the government has an abſolute "negative on the proceedings of the reſt, all public "buſineſs may be at a ſtand; though it is, no doubt, "very uſeful to provide againſt precipitate reſolutions, "by a power to command a reviſion or a ſuſpenſion "of decrees. In this reſpect both our own conſtitu-"tion, and that of the United States of North Ame-"rica, are defective."

The inconvenience of this ſyſtem would be experienced in the Engliſh government, but that the all controlling influence of the crown, in fact, directs the proceedings of both the houſes that have a negative upon it. But in your conſtitution, in which the

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three powers are really independent on each other, the inconvenience of the ſyſtem may be felt. It was ſo lately in the ſimilar conſtitution of the ſtate of Pennſylvania, when the houſe of repreſentatives preferring one mode of chuſing the electors of the Preſident, and the Senate another, they actually ſeparated without agreeing upon any; ſo that the ſtate was in danger of loſing its vote in that important queſtion; and at a ſecond meeting, they made a compromiſe that really pleaſed neither of them, and that was condemned by the people in general.

This inconvenience will not be wholly remedied by any different mode of chuſing the Senators, but only by taking from them their abſolute negative on the proceedings of the houſe of repreſentatives; as, for a ſimilar reaſon, this is not given to the Preſident of the United States. The more temperate deliberations of a few, may be an uſeful check upon the impetuoſity with which popular ſpeakers often impel the proceedings of a greater number; but they are not ſo likely to entertain the real ſentiments, and conform to the wiſhes, of the people at large, as the perſons who are their more immediate and their later choice. A Senate choſen in a prior period will more probably retain the prevailing ſentiments and views of that period, than thoſe of the time preſent. But for that very reaſon, they will be a more natural and uſeful check on deciſions dictated by momentary circumſtances, which are apt to be precipitate and unwiſe.

4. So excellent a conſtitution as is that of this country deſerves to be guarded with the greateſt care; and yet in this reſpect it appears to me to be defective, as it contains no ſufficient proviſion for guarding againſt violations of it by perſons entruſted with its adminiſtration. To decide in queſtions of this high and ſerious nature, there ſhould, I think, be a *ſpecial court*, conſiſting of deputies from all the ſtates of the union.

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The greateſt danger of any encroachment on the conſtitution is from the Congreſs miſtaking, or exceeding, their power; and by proceeding without any check of this kind, they might gradually aſſume all the power of the Engliſh parliament, which is uncontrouled by any defined conſtitution. And certainly no body of men ſhould be judges in their own cauſe.

The ordinary judges, though continuing in office during their good behaviour, and not removeable at any perſon's pleaſure, are ſo connected with perſons in power, and eſpecially thoſe from whom they received their appointments, that they have been found, with very few exceptions, to favour the exiſting adminiſtration in all countries, and in all times.

I would alſo take the liberty to propoſe that it ſhould be in the power of the legiſlature of any of the ſeparate ſtates to call this ſpecial court, and lay before it whatever they may apprehend to have been a violation of the conſtitution, by the Congreſs, the Preſident, or any man, or body of men, whatever.

5. If I might take the liberty to cenſure not only your government, but that of every other in the world, it would be your requiring *oaths of allegiance*, and indeed any declaration of a man's principles or ſentiments in words or writing. Beſides being an abuſe of religion, and a temptation to prevaricate, I do not believe that this meaſure has ever been found to anſwer the end propoſed by it. On one pretence or other, and eſpecially that of perſons being compelled to take them, through the impoſſibility of avoiding them, it will be maintained by many, that they are of no force or obligation; and in many countries oaths of allegiance have been changed to others inconſiſtent with them, and yet have not been objected to on that account. Witneſs thoſe that have been taken in France to the different conſtitutions of that country ſince the abolition of monarchy.

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A few conſcientious perſons, who wiſh to be quiet, and who might be ſafely truſted in any government, will ſcruple to take ſuch oaths; and by this means good ſubjects are excluded, while men of no principle, ſuch as alone are dangerous, will make no difficulty of taking any oath that you chuſe to impoſe.

It might, ſurely, be ſufficient to puniſh perſons reſiding in any country when they are found to act contrary to the laws of it. For my own part I prefer the ſituation of an alien, inconvenient as it is in ſeveral reſpects, rather than make the harſh declaration which your laws require reſpecting the country of which I am a native; but while my perſon and my property are in your power, have you not ſufficient hold upon me, without requiring any verbal declaration about *renouncing England*, and of my attachment to America?

It may be prudent not to admit ſtrangers to offices of truſt and power till after a competent time of reſidence; ſo that it may be preſumed that they have acquired a ſufficient knowledge of your laws and conſtitution, and a proper attachment to them. But the declaration of this by an oath appears to me to be ſuperfluous, to be a cauſe of diſtreſs to the conſcientious, and no bar whatever to thoſe whom you would wiſh to keep out of the country.

I am, &c.

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LETTER X.

Of Infringements of the Conſtitution by the Acts of Congreſs reſpecting the Regulation of Commerce, the Power of making Peace and War, and Reſtrictions of the Freedom of Speech and of the Preſs.

My Friends and Neighbours,

WHEN I left England, I was induced to come hither chiefly on account of my high admiration of the conſtitution of your government. It was at that time the only one that had been drawn up with deliberation by perſons appointed for that expreſs purpoſe and ſolemnly accepted by the nation. It was wholly founded on the *rights of man*, and the *ſovereignty of the people*. In other words it was purely *republican*, every officer being choſen by the people, to ſerve them for a limited time, and afterwards accountable to them for their conduct. There were no hereditary honours, or powers of any kind, and no form of religion eſtabliſhed by law. The power of making peace or war, and alſo that of regulating commerce with foreign nations, as well as among yourſelves, was wiſely placed in the Congreſs, of which your immediate repreſentatives (who are the moſt intereſted in every thing of this kind) are the moſt eſſential part. Your country was then open to all new comers without any reſtriction; and that great and neceſſary guard of liberty, the *the freedom of ſpeech and of the*

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preſs, was uncontrolled. Your conſtitution expreſsly ſays that " the migration of ſuch perſons as any ſtate " then exiſting ſhould think proper to admit ſhould " not be prohibited by Congreſs till the year 1808; " and that the Congreſs ſhould make no law abridg- " the freedom of ſpeech or of the preſs."

To my great ſurprize and mortification, however, I now find that ſeveral of theſe articles, eſſential to a truly free government, have been, in my opinion, on one pretence or other, infringed. Or, if the preſent ſtate of things be really agreeable to the Conſtitution, it was not drawn up for the uſe of plain men, but of very acute lawyers only. Certainly the comment does not naturally flow from the text; or there was in the letter of the conſtitution a latent ambiguity, which defeats the profeſſed object of it. Thus becauſe your Conſtitution gives to the Preſident, and two thirds of the Senate, the power of making *treaties* with foreign powers, and treaties may relate to any ſubject in which different ſtates may be concerned, they may make *treaties of alliance, offenſive and defenſive*, and alſo *treaties of commerce;* and by this means all interference of the proper repreſentatives of the people either in the buſineſs of *commerce*, or of *peace and war*, in which they are moſt concerned, and in which they therefore ought in reaſon to have the moſt controll, is effectually precluded. The treaty, ſhackling their commerce, or involving them in a war, is actually made independently of them, and all their objections to it have no effect.

Since treaties become parts of the law, by which the courts of juſtice are bound, I do not ſee but that it is in the power of the Preſident and two thirds of the ſenate, that is I believe of twenty-one men, to bind the country *in all caſes whatever*. For what is there that may not be introduced into ſome treaty? In this way this country might have become a party in the treaty of Pilnitz or of Pavia, and thus have been engaged, tho' ever ſo reluctantly, in the coalition againſt the liberties of France, and of Europe in general.

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It is, moreover, contended by *the friends*, as they are called, of *government*, that when, in conſequence of any treaty, money is to be raiſed to carry it into effect, the repreſentatives of the nation, who give the money, muſt abſolutely raiſe the ſum required, or as the phraſe is, *make the appropriations;* having no other choice than that of raiſing it in what they may think the beſt manner.

This is a power which even the parliament of Great Britain has not yet been brought to ſurrender. There the king has, indeed, the nominal power of making peace and war, and alſo treaties of every kind. But if *money* be neceſſary to carry them into execution, the treaties come under diſcuſſion in the Houſe of Commons, and the people give or with-hold their money as they think proper; ſo that they have a virtual negative on all the meaſures of the court; and certainly it is highly reaſonable that they ſhould have it. And was not this intended by the framers of your conſtitution too? Could they give the Congreſs the power of making peace and war, and alſo that of regulating commerce in one part of that inſtrument, and take it out of their hands in another? Such manifeſt inconſiſtency and deceit is not to be ſuppoſed.

It, therefore, appears moſt clearly to me, who am a ſtranger among you, that the real meaning and intent of the conſtitution in theſe two eſſential articles has been perverted, that a moſt important power has been taken from the many, and transferred to the few, and that the moſt valuable intereſts of the former have been ſurrendered to the latter. If in this I reaſon wrong, I wiſh to be ſet right. But I preſume that your *conſtitution* was drawn up for the uſe of the citizens at large, and in ſuch language as it was thought they might underſtand; and this language being Engliſh, I may be ſuppoſed to underſtand it as well as yourſelves. Your conſtitution is not like that of the Engliſh government, to be looked for in remote hiſtory, or collected from

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the actual exercise of it, like the principles of the *common law*. It is committed to *writing*, and was made in the memory of persons now living; so that the real meaning of every article of it, and the reasons on which they were founded, are well known.

So evident is it, in my opinion, that the *alien and sedition acts* are unconstitutional, that I shall not enlarge on the proof of this. It is sufficient, I think, to observe with respect to them, that the Congress have made laws (if unconstitutional acts can be called *laws*) on subjects with respect to which they were expressly forbidden by the constitution to make any. I shall, therefore, content myself with making some observations on the nature and tendency of them.

Laws calculated to restrain the freedom of speech and of the press, which have always been made on the pretence of the *abuse* of it, are of so suspicious a nature in themselves, and have been so constantly the resort of arbitrary governments, that I was beyond measure astonished to find them introduced here; and yet in some respects the laws that have lately been made by Congress are more severe than those in England.

While the press is open to the friends, as well as the enemies, of those in power, I see no good reason why they should not be content to defend themselves with the same weapons with which they are attacked. Why should any man shelter himself behind *penal laws* when he is attacked by *argument*, if it was in his power to defend himself in the same way? Argument answers the purpose so much more effectually than *force*, that it is reasonable to conclude, that recourse will never be had to the latter, but when there is a failure of the former. Why do we use a rod to children, but because they are incapable of hearing reason? In no country will there ever be wanting men sufficiently able, and willing to defend the conduct of the governing powers. To this standard men of genius are ready

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enough to run, from motives that do not need to be pointed out.

All mere *opinions* concerning the conduct of perſons in public offices ought to be as free as any other opinions concerning ſubjects that are intereſting to the community. In fact, it is no more than maſters cenſuring the conduct of their ſervants. For every individual is a part of the great maſs, for the uſe of whom all governments were inſtituted. But perſons in *office*, which neceſſarily implies *ſervitude*, being uſually called *governors*, are apt to arrogate to themſelves the prerogatives of *maſters;* and their friends and flatterers call almoſt every cenſure on their conduct, every thing that has in it more of freedom than they like, in ſpeaking or writing, *ſedition* or *treaſon:* whereas, in reaſon nothing ought to be ſo termed, that does not immediateiy affect the peace of the country.

The characters, or the lives, of perſons in office, by whatever names they may be called, ought not to be conſidered in any other light than thoſe of other individuals, under the protection of the ſame laws. An attempt to take the life of a king would never have been conſidered as *high treaſon* in Europe, if kings had not been conſidered in a different light from that of the ſervants of the Public. Not but that the lives of all public officers, civil or military, even that of a conſtable, being of great importance to the ſociety, the crime of taking them away is greater than that of the murder of private perſons; but ſtill it is a different thing from that of high treaſon. But though it may be proper to guard the *lives* of public officers by ſevere penal laws, there is no neceſſity for ſuch a defence of their *characters*, or *public conduct;* becauſe they may be defended by the ſame means by which they are attacked. When a life is taken the miſchief is without remedy, but any injury done to a character may be repaired.

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Governors vainly endeavour to ward off impending evils by impoſing ſilence on their adverſaries. Hiſtory ſhews that no government ever derived any permanent advantage from meaſures of this kind. The leſs men have the liberty to *ſpeak*, the more they will *think;* and they naturally ſuſpect that what they are forbidden to examine will not bear examination.

In no country was there ever leſs liberty of printing and publiſhing than in France before the revolution. When I was at Paris, in 1774, the tranſlator of the firſt volume of my *Experiments on Air* could not obtain leave to publiſh the whole of my Preface, which contained ſome free ſentiments concerning the general extenſion of knowledge. The inſpector of the preſs deſired a friend to inform me, that he had not himſelf any objection to the publication; but that the nature of his office was ſuch, that it would be too hazardous for him to admit of it.

But did this ſtrictneſs prevent the revolution? The freeſt publications were at the ſame time circulated with the greateſt induſtry, and they were read with avidity, and with tenfold effect, in conſequence of it. The ſame will be the caſe in every other country in which the ſame meaſures ſhall be adopted; ſo that without pretending to any extraordinary means of prying into futurity, we may predict, that the cauſe of *monarchy* in England, and that of *federaliſm* in this country, will be no gainers eventually by what their advocates are doing in this way.*

I am, &c.

* The event has abundantly juſtified this prediction.

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LETTER XI.

Of the Laws relating to Aliens, and the Naturalization of Foreigners.

My Friends and Neighbours,

ALL the laws reſpecting *aliens*, and thoſe that are calculated to throw difficulties in the way of *naturalization*, have been made ſince my arrival in the country, and I am far from ſeeing the wiſdom of them. Little did I then expect that, tho' I continued an alien, I ſhould not have the right of a *trial by jury*, which your conſtitution expreſsly gives to *all perſons* without exception, if I ſhould be accuſed of any crime; whereas I now find that, not only without the benefit of a jury, but that even without a *trial*, or indeed any formal *accuſation*, your Preſident may, of his own ſuſpicion only, ſend me out of the country. And in this caſe perfect innocence is no ſecurity; ſince the beſt of men are liable to prejudice, and open to falſe information.

It is not denied that thoſe laws were intended to exclude from this country the friends of liberty, opprobriouſly called *Jacobins*, *Democrats*, *&c.* emigrating from Europe, a deſcription of men in which I am proud to rank myſelf. But conſider the matter calmly, and ſay whether you can think the object worth ſecuring by this means. What does this country, I do not ſay the *governors* of it, but what does *the country*, what do *yourſelves*, gain by it? You certainly do not now want people from Europe. Your population increaſes faſt enough without this additional ſource; but you want the *money* of Europeans, to clear your country, and cultivate your lands, and you cannot expect the money without the *men*.

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Had thoſe laws been made ſix years ago, there would not have been an Engliſhman in this place; but though the makers and friends of the laws would not have been ſorry for this, can *you* ſay the ſame? Have the proprietors of lands and houſes, have your artiſans, and your labouring poor, derived no advantage from our reſidence among you? Have you not been beneſited by the purchaſes we have made, and the punctuality of our payments; and what is perhaps more than this, by the example of our activity and induſtry, which are habitual to Engliſhmen?

You ſee, beſides, that the dread of our *politics*, which has been the cauſe of all theſe harſh laws, is altogether chimerical. For the Engliſh of this place are not more agreed on this ſubject than you are yourſelves. Several of us are as good federaliſts as any of you, and none of us more violently democratical than others of you. And the generality are men who quietly mind their buſineſs, without giving themſelves, or you, any trouble on the ſubject. Very far ſhould I have been from writing theſe expoſtulatory letters on the ſubject of Politics, if I could have been ſuffered as quietly to follow the buſineſs of my library and laboratory, as they do that of their ſeveral profeſſions. But to be held out as I have been for ſeveral years as a dangerous perſon, on whom it behoves the governors of the country to keep a watchful eye, and perhaps to have been in a great meaſure the cauſe of the prevailing jealouſy of foreigners, and of the laws that are calculated to exclude them, has at length, though with much reluctance, led me to endeavour to undeceive you. If I ſucceed it will be to your advantage as well as mine. If not, things will only remain as they were before.

Admitting the object of our adverſaries to be a proper one, I do not ſee that they gain any advantage by rendering naturalization difficult. It is not a man's being kept by force in the ſtate of an alien that will diſ-

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poſe him to think better of any country; nor, if his diſpoſition be hoſtile to it, and he be chagrined by this ſuſpicion of him, will it be at all the leſs in his power to do the miſchief that is apprehended from him. His being an alien does not prevent his ſpeaking or writing; and by the uſe of his tongue, and his pen, he has all the influence that his talents and activity can give him. All that you can take from him is his capacity for enjoying any civil office, which a ſtranger, though naturalized, would not ſoon expect; and his ſingle vote for any other perſon to gain it is of trifling conſequence among many thouſands.

If the groſs abuſe from which I have never been exempted ever ſince my arrival in this country could have made me an enemy to it (which it by no means has done) was it not in my power to have written in your newſpapers, or to have publiſhed political pamphlets, either anonymouſly, or otherwiſe, as I ſhould have thought moſt prudent, and by that means to have done as much miſchief as if I had been naturalized?

Where, then, is the wiſdom of theſe meaſures, which prevent the coming of valuable emigrants, ſuch as you wiſh to receive, and do not take from thoſe that you diſlike the power of injuring you? To make theſe meaſures of any real uſe to thoſe who are advocates for them, they ought to have been carried farther Aliens ſhould not have been allowed the uſe of pen, ink and paper; or whatever they wrote, ſhould have been ſubject to the inſpection of the officers of government. They ſhould alſo have ſeen no company but in the preſence of the ſame officers. This being underſtood, the end would be effectually gained, by the voluntary retreat of all the aliens in the country, and the prevention of the arrival of any more. The half meaſures you now take are calculated to do you more harm than good.

What you ſee of Engliſhmen in this place, you may take for granted is equally true of thoſe that are

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ſettled in other parts of the continent. The generality of them only wiſh to be quiet; and if they were otherwiſe diſpoſed, they are in no degree formidable, and the country derives advantage from their capital and their example, eſpecially that of the Engliſh farmers; and ſuch men are of the greateſt importance in this agricultural country.

But to find in America the ſame maxims of government, and the ſame proceedings, from which many of us fled from Europe, and to be reproached as diſturbers of government *there*, and chiefly becauſe we did what the court of England will never forgive in favour of liberty here, is, we own, a great diſappointment to us, eſpecially as we cannot now return. Had Dr. Price himſelf, the great friend of American liberty in England, or Dr. Wren, with both of whom I zealouſly acted in behalf of your priſoners, who muſt otherwiſe have ſtarved, and in every other way in which we could ſafely ſerve your cauſe, becauſe we thought it the cauſe of *liberty and juſtice*, againſt *tyranny and oppreſſion;* I ſay, had either of theſe zealous and active, and certainly, diſintereſted friends of America, been now living, they would not have been more welcome here than myſelf; and they would have held up their hands with aſtoniſhment to ſee many of the old tories, the avowed enemies of your revolution, in greater favour than themſelves. If in this you act on the chriſtian principle of *forgiving and loving your enemies*, for which, *if they repent*, you are to be commended, you ſhould not forget your obligations to old and ſteady friends.

The emigrants you wiſh to exclude are thoſe who might reaſonably expect to be the beſt received here, as moſt likely to be attached to your government; becauſe it is free from every thing that they complain of at home. Finding here no hereditary honours or powers, no church eſtabliſhment, few taxes, and thoſe laid by the repreſentatives of the people, freely cho-

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ſen, what could lead to a ſuſpicion that perſons flying from what was in all reſpects the reverſe of this in Europe ſhould not be the beſt friends to the government here.

I am, &c.

LETTER XII.

Of the Policy of America with Reſpect to Foreign Nations.

My Friends and Neighbours,

HAVING taken the liberty in the preceding letters to arraign the wiſdom of ſome of the late meaſures of your government with reſpect to your *home concerns*, I ſhall proceed with the ſame, I hope not offenſive, freedom, to ſay what I think of your conduct towards *foreign nations;* and with reſpect to *them* I am of opinion that you have done what your intereſt required you not to have done.

While an alliance ſubſiſted between this country and France, which had given you material aſſiſtance in aſſerting your independence, a treaty of *amity* as well as of commerce and navigation, ſhould not, I think have been made with England without the knowledge, if not the concurrence, of the French government. And this being done while thoſe countries were in a ſtate of war, could not fail to give umbrage to France, eſpecially as your ambaſſador, who negociated the treaty, was oſtenſibly ſent for a very different purpoſe, viz.

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to demand ſatisfaction for injuries received from England. In this proceeding I ſee nothing of the fairneſs and openneſs that I ſhould have expected from a republican government.

The French government, however, reſented this conduct more than reaſon and true policy required; and though it might have been expected that, if friend ſhip was really intended, a perſon ſuppoſed to be friendly to them would have been ſent to negociate with them, they had no right to reject any perſons in whom this country put confidence.

The French government, alſo, following the example of England, was much to be blamed for their conduct to this country, and to the neutral nations in general. And when your coaſts were inſulted, and your veſſels captured almoſt in the mouths of your harbours, you did right, I think, to protect your property, and repel that violent aggreſſion. But this might have been done without making it a national quarrel, by allowing the merchants to defend their property, which they would have done at no great expence; and this would have been defrayed in the beſt manner by an advance of the price of their goods. But to build navies, and eſpecially to raiſe ſtanding armies, on account of any apprehenſion you could reaſonably have from France, a country ſo diſtant, and which could not have any imaginable motive for quarrelling with you, was, in my opinion, the wildeſt policy, and putting the country to a great expence for nothing, if not worſe than nothing. For one writer on the ſide of your government in the Philadelphia Gazette for October 19, ſays that the army was intended to overawe, or ſuppreſs, the democrats. If this be true (and this writer has better means of information than I have) it is a declaration of war againſt thoſe who diſapprove the late meaſures.*

* The writer of this remarkable paper ſays, "Though France or "Rigaud ſhould not invade us, we have, nevertheleſs, all the hoſt of

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Though I honour your Preſident for his frank and open conduct, the reverſe of that of the crafty politician, which I conſider as one of the moſt deteſtable of human characters, I could not approve of his unneceſſary and inceſſant, not to ſay unjuſt, invectives againſt the French government. It was in my opinion unbecoming a wiſe ſtateſman, and muſt render a reconciliation with France (which is certainly a very deſirable object) more difficult than it would otherwiſe be, during his preſidency; unleſs the French directory have more temper and prudence than we can reaſonably expect.

All this, you will ſay, is nothing more than common place party politics. But if I have nothing better, what muſt I ſay? You wiſh I ſuppoſe, to know my ſentiments, and they are ſuch as I have to offer on a ſubject which has agitated the minds of all the citizens of the United States. However, I ſhall now proceed to obſervations that are not ſo very trite, and indeed almoſt peculiar to myſelf.

If any country in the world be ſo ſituate d as to be capable of deriving advantage from all nations, and of receiving injury from none of them, it is ſurely this. The native Indians being out of the queſtion,

" internal enemies to keep down. What can do it ſo effectually as a " good body of troops?—To keep thieves off, have a gun or a ſword " at your bed ſide. To keep traitors, united Iriſhmen, and French- " men in awe, have ſome troops ready to repel the firſt invaders, to " cruſh the firſt riſings and ſeditions. An ounce of prevention is " worth a tun of remedy."—

" Military force, they tell us, is ſometimes abuſed. What power " is not? Civil power certainly is. But a military force more fre- " quently turns againſt its employers than it betrays or repreſſes liber- " ty. That is, indeed, a ſtrong argument againſt uſing it. But re- " mote dangers are to be diſregarded when greater are imminent. " Jacobins are to be kept out of the army and militia. Government " muſt uſe its beſt courage and vigilance."

" Plain truth, like this, is not to be expected from men in Congreſs, " or general courts. This is no good reaſon why it ſhould not be told " by other honeſt men, nor why honeſt men ſhould reject it."

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as having no power to hurt you, all that you can have in contemplation are the ſeveral powers of Europe, generally, and eſpecially at this time, in a ſtate of war with each other. But as it is the intereſt of them all to be upon good terms with this country, it is very eaſy for this country to be upon good terms with them, without taking any part in their quarrels.

As this nation wants no territory belonging either to France or England, the two great rival nations of Europe, and they have no viſible intereſt in coveting any thing belonging to this, no natural cauſe of hoſtility can exiſt with reſpect to either of them. Every poſſible difference muſt relate to commercial intercourſe. But if regard to *profit and loſs* be the leading principle in all tranſactions of a commercial nature, the protection of commerce can never be a juſtifiable cauſe of war; becauſe, whatever be the iſſue of national hoſtility, the loſs muſt far exceed the amount of all the poſſible gain. It is the part of wiſdom, therefore, to bear a ſmaller loſs, rather than endeavour to repair it, with the certainty of incurring a greater.

As to mere *inſults*, there is more dignity in diſpiſing than in reſenting them. No expreſſions of contempt can juſtify a war between nations, any more than it will juſtify duels between individuals. In both caſes alike it is the conduct of men governed by paſſion rather than by reaſon, by a principle of falſe honor, rather than the true one.

I, as a democrat, and an enemy to ſtanding armies, thank the writer of this paper, and alſo the perſon who introduced the extracts from it into the *Northumberland Gazette of Nov.* 9, for this frank communication. When perſons in office will not, as this writer ſays, ſpeak out, and tell their whole meaning, we are obliged to their friends for doing it for them. I wiſh this paper may be copied into every Newſpaper in the United States; as I am confident it would do more towards opening the eyes of the people with reſpect to the late meaſures of the government, than all our writing. And if this be done, there will be nothing to apprehend either from ſedition laws, or ſtanding armies. The taliſman will be broken, and the caſtle, with all its terrific apparatus, will vaniſh at once.

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All the intercourſe you can want with any foreign nation is, as I have obſerved, a commercial one; and the idea of commerce is very ſimple. It conſiſts in nothing more than the exchange of one commodity for another. If any thing that you have be of leſs value to you than it is to a foreign nation, and any thing that they have be of more value to you than it is to them, it is for the benefit of both countries to exchange the one for the other. But the means, or the mode, in which this exchange is made is not the commerce. A third nation might be the carrier of the different commodities from the one to the other.

If the merchants of either of the two countries undertake this buſineſs, it is foreign to what is properly their own; and if, in any ſituation of national affairs, there be peculiar hazard in this buſineſs, thoſe who undertake it ought to lay their account with that hazard before they engage in it, as perſons who undertake any other kind of buſineſs do with reſpect to theirs. And whatever loſs is incurred by it, it will not fall upon them, but upon their cuſtomers. For in all caſes the conſumer is the perſon who pays every expence attending the raiſing, or the tranſport, of the commodity that he purchaſes.

If any number of perſons enſure the ſafety of ſhips at ſea, they expect to be gainers by that undertaking, as well as the merchant by his, or the farmer by his; and the merchant will not fail to charge the price of the inſurance to his cuſtomers. Is it not far better, then, to let things go on in this natural train, in which the only inconvenience is that, during this ſtate of things, the conſumer will pay a little more than uſual for his commodity, than to defend this particular branch of buſineſs by involving the nation in a war?

Excluſive of all conſideration of the horrors of war to which ſtateſmen in general give little atten-

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tion, it were far better, that is, far leſs expenſive, for the nation to pay for all the loſs by a direct tax; but much better ſtill, if the riſk of loſs be very great, to ſuſpend that branch of buſineſs altogether. Others, who can do it at a leſs riſk, will be ready enough to undertake it; and the competition of nations, and of merchants, is ſuch, that the country will be ſerved as well, and as cheaply, as the ſtate of things will bear. While the ſea remains open to all nations, we need not fear wanting any thing that other nations can ſupply us with. Allowing this to be an evil, or an undeſirable ſtate of things, it cannot be of any long continuance. After this things will return to their natural ſtate, and the merchants may undertake the carrying trade, in addition to their proper buſineſs, as before.

But if navies muſt be built and manned for the ſake of protecting this particular branch of buſineſs, and what is a neceſſary conſequence, if hoſtilities muſt be engaged in firſt at ſea, and then by land; and if ambaſſadors muſt be maintained at foreign courts, which is another conſequence of the ſame ſyſtem, for one dollar that the former ſyſtem would require, this will require a thouſand, to ſay nothing of the intricacy of foreign politics, and the lives that will be loſt in war. The kingdom of China acts upon the ſyſtem that I wiſh to recommend. That country has an extenſive commerce with all the world, but it employs few ſhips of its own, it has no reſident ambaſſador at any foreign court, and it has no wars on account of commerce.

The merchant, or rather the carrier of mercandiſe from port to port, will ſay, that as he follows a *lawful occupation*, he ought to be protected in it. But then every other perſon whoſe occupation is lawful has the ſame plea for a reimburſement of his loſſes; for example the farmer, the manufacturer, &c. Do they not all lay their account with the accidents to which their

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ſeveral profeſſions are liable, and charge their cuſtomers accordingly?

If the farmer ſhould apply to Congreſs for indemnification of his loſſes by ſtorms, drought, or inſects, would he not be told that he knew his undertaking to be ſubject to all thoſe accidents, that it was his buſineſs, and not theirs, to guard againſt them as well as he could, and that he might indemnify himſelf by the advanced prices of ſuch products as he was able to raiſe? And ſhould not the ſhipper of goods, and the inſurers, be content with a ſimilar anſwer to *their* complaints, whether of loſſes by pirates, privateers of other nations, &c. &c. as well as by ſhipwrecks. All theſe ſhould be equally conſidered as *accidents*, to which, in a particular ſtate of things, they knew their undertaking to be liable, as much as the farmer was appriſed of the danger of bad ſeaſons.

They might farther be told, that it would be the extreme of folly, and injuſtice, in the repreſentatives of the nation, to involve it in a ſtate of war, for the recovery of any ſum they could have loſt by the certain expenditure of a hundred times as much; beſides hazarding the ſafety of the whole ſtate.

It follows from theſe principles, that if any indemnification be procured from a foreign nation for the unjuſt ſeizing of ſhips and merchandize, the perſons entitled to it are not the merchants or the inſurers of merchandiſe. For, as a body, they are ſufficiently indemnified already, their buſineſs having been on the whole a gainful one, even in time of war; but thoſe who have indemnified them by giving an advanced price for their goods. And as it is impoſſible to find theſe perſons, who are the only ſufferers, the money ſhould go to the public treaſury, for the alleviation of the public burdens.

The body of merchants not being numerous, and eaſily uniting for their common intereſt, can bring their complaints in a plauſible form before the legiſ-

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lature; and by means of their intereſt with the members may procure what is not theirdue; whereas the purchaſers of their goods have no ſuch advantage. They are infinitely more numerous, they are diſperſed over the whole country, and few of them are acquainted with thoſe who have influence in public affairs; and therefore their complaints are not heard, nor are they ſufficiently attended to.

It is hoped, however, that their ſituation will in time be better underſtood, and that the only relief that can be given will be afforded them. It was an excellent maxim frequently inculcated by my friend Dr. Jebb, that *truth and right will finally prevail*, and that *no good effort is ever wholly loſt*, and I am as confident of it in this caſe, as in any other, remote as the juſt view of it may now be from the apprehenſion of the generality. On this important ſubject of *Political Arithmetic*, I would recommend the *Eſſays of Mr. Cooper*, who independently of me adopted the ſame principles, and has enforced them in his excellent manner.

A nation conducting its affairs on theſe maxims, defending its territory by a well diſciplined militia, remonſtrating againſt injuries from other nations, but never revenging them, and withal acting juſtly and generouſly on all occaſions, could not fail to be reſpected, and would not be ſubject to many inſults. It would inſure the invaluable bleſſing of *peace*. It would employ its hands, and its capital, in the improvement of the country, in making bridges, roads, and navigable canals, in encouraging ſcience, agriculture, and manufactures. It would contract no debts, and have occaſion for few taxes; and therefore could not fail to flouriſh more than any country has ever yet done.

When I once took the liberty to throw out theſe hints to the Preſident, to whom they were not new, he quoted the authority of ſome perſon which I do not recollect, who ſaid that "a nation that could act on

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" ſuch maxims would command the world!" I doubt not it ſoon would; and there *is* a nation now under the diſcipline of providence deſtined for this great purpoſe. It is to govern the world in peace, when *nation will no more riſe up againſt nation, and when they will learn war no more.* This happy ſtate of things is diſtinctly announced in the prophecies of ſcripture, ſo that no chriſtian can have any doubt with reſpect to it; and the preſent appearance of things in the old world is ſuch as leads me to expect that it will take place at no very great diſtance of time. It is, however, according to the ſame prophecies, to be preceded by a ſeaſon of uncommon calamity ſuch as *there never was ſince there was a nation* (Dan. xii. 1.) and eſpecially by the deſtruction of men in war, which we now ſee abundantly verified; but the final iſſue is to be moſt glorious and happy. It will be what is in the prophecies called the *kingdom of heaven*, a ſtate of *righteouſneſs and peace.* With reſpect to this, I ſaid ſome years ago, what I ſhall repeat, and conclude with now. " May this kingdom of God, and of Chriſt, that which " I conceive to be intended in the Lord's prayer, ful- " ly come, though all the kingdoms of the world be " removed to make way for it."

Hoping to have no occaſion to trouble you with any more Letters of this kind, I am, with my wiſhes and prayers for your temporal and eternal welfare,

My Friends and Neighbours,

Yours ſincerely,

J. PRIESTLEY.

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P. S. Finding that it is generally reported among thoſe who call themſelves *Federaliſts*, that Mr. Cooper writes as prompted, or ſupported, by me, I think it right to obſerve, that they who believe this know nothing of Mr. Cooper, or of me. Every thing that he has written has been wholly independent of me. He is not a man that requires to be prompted, or ſupported, by any perſon. Though I was frequently in his company during the publication of his Eſſays, I never ſaw one of them, nor do I diſtinctly recollect even hearing him mention the ſubject of any of them, before their publication.

MAXIMS

OF

POLITICAL ARITHMETIC,

Applied to the caſe of the United States of America, firſt publiſhed in the Aurora, for February 26 and 27, 1798. (By a Quaker in Politics.)*

AN idea of the true intereſts of any country is perhaps moſt eaſily formed by ſuppoſing it to be the property of one perſon, who would naturally wiſh to de-

* Some of the leading ſentiments in this paper are the ſame with thoſe in the preceding *Letters*: but they could not well be left out, and I think them of ſufficient importance to be repeated.

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rive the greateſt advantage from it, and who would therefore, lay out his capital in ſuch a manner as to make it the moſt productive to him. An attention to the ſeparate and diſcordant intereſts of different claſſes of men, is apt to diſtract the mind: but when all the people are conſidered as members of one family, who can be diſpoſed of, and employed, as the head of it ſhall direct, for the common benefit, that cauſe of embarraſſment is removed.

To derive the greateſt advantage from any country it will be neceſſary that attention be paid, in the firſt place, to the wants of nature, and to raiſe from it, in the greateſt quantity and perfection, ſuch productions as are neceſſary to feed and clothe the inhabitants, and to provide them with habitations, in order to guard them againſt the inclemency of the weather; and after this ſuch as are of uſe to their more comfortable accommodation, and the ſupply of artificial wants.

If any country be completely inſulated, or cut off from all communication with other countries, it will be neceſſary to raiſe all thoſe articles within itſelf; but when a communication is opened with other countries, the proprietor will do well to give his whole attention to thoſe productions which his own country can beſt yield, and exchange the ſurplus for ſuch articles as other countries can better ſupply him with. For by that means, his labour will be employed to the moſt advantage. If, for example, it would employ him a month to go through all the proceſſes which are neceſſary to make a piece of cloth, when the effect of the labour of a week in his huſbandry would enable him to purchaſe that cloth, it will be better for him to confine himſelf to his huſbandry, and buy his cloth; beſides that, not making it his ſole buſineſs, he would not, with any labour, make it ſo well. And now that a communication by ſea with all parts of the world is ſo well eſtabliſhed, that it may be depended upon that

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whatever any country wants another can ſupply it with, to the advantage of both, this exchange may be made with little interruption, even by war.

Commerce conſiſts in the exchange of the commodities of one country for thoſe of another; and as this, like any other buſineſs, will be performed to the moſt advantage by perſons who give their whole attention to it, and who are called *merchants*, it will be moſt convenient, in general, that this be done by them, rather than by thoſe who employ themſelves in raiſing the produce. The buſineſs of conveying the produce of one country to another is a different thing from merchandiſe. Thoſe who employ ſhips for this purpoſe, are paid for their trouble by the freight of their veſſels, while the merchant ſubſiſts from what he gains by the exchange of commodities.

What is generally termed *active commerce* is that which is carried on by the natives of any country in ſhips of their own, conveying their produce to other countries, and bringing back theirs in return; and that is called *paſſive commerce* which is carried on at home, people of other countries bringing their commodities, and taking back what they want in exchange for them. The quantity of proper commerce, or merchandiſe, is the ſame in both theſe caſes. All the difference conſiſts in the employment given to the carriers, and the ſhipping, of the different countries.

While the communication with other countries by ſea is open, it cannot be for the intereſt of any country, either to impoſe duties on goods brought into it, or to give bounties on thoſe that are exported: becauſe, by both theſe means, the people are made to pay more than they otherwiſe would do for the ſame benefit. In both caſes the price of the goods muſt be advanced. He who pays the duty will be refunded at leaſt, by the perſons who purchaſe the commo-

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dity, and the bounty to the vender muſt be paid by a tax on all the inhabitants.

It is, no doubt, the intereſt of any particular claſs of perſons to extend their buſineſs, and thereby increaſe their gains. But if their fellow citizens pay more in the advanced price of what they purchaſe than their gain amounts to, the community is a loſer; and if it be equal, one claſs is made to contribute to the maintenance of another, when all have an equal natural right to the fruits of their own labour.

For the ſame reaſon, if, on any account, the conveyance of goods from one country to another be attended with more loſs than gain, the perſon in whoſe hands was the property of the whole would diſcontinue that branch of buſineſs, and employ his capital in ſome other way, or rather let it remain unproductive than employ it to a certain loſs.

Theſe maxims appear to me to be incontrovertible in the abſtract. What then may be learned from them with reſpect to this country, ſituated as it now is?

Without inquiring into the cauſe, which is no part of my object, it is a fact, that the conveyance of goods, or the carrying trade of this country, which has generally been taken up by the merchants, though it is no neeeſſary branch of their buſineſs, is peculiarly hazardous, and of courſe expenſive. This expence the country at large muſt pay, in the advanced price of the goods purchaſed. In this ſtate of things it has alſo been found neceſſary to ſend ambaſſadors to diſtant countries, in order to remove the ſuppoſed cauſe of the difficulty, which is attended with another expence. It has likewiſe been thought neceſſary to build ſhips of war for the purpoſe of protecting this carrying trade; and if this be done to any effect, it muſt be attended with much more expence.

I do not pretend to be able to calculate the expence occaſioned by any of theſe circumſtances; but the

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amount of all the three, viz. the additional price to the carrier to indemnify him for his riſque, the expence of ambaſſadors, and that of fitting out ſhips of war, I cannot help thinking muſt be much more than all the profit that can be derived from the carrying trade; and if ſo, a perſon who had the abſolute command of all the ſhipping, and all the capital, of the country, would ſee it to be his intereſt to lay up his ſhips for the preſent, and make ſome other uſe of his capital. And as the greateſt part of the country is as yet uncleared, and there is a great want of roads, bridges and canals, the uſe of which would ſufficiently repay him for any ſums laid out upon them, and they would not fail to contribute to the improvement of the country, which I ſuppoſe to be his eſtate, he would naturally lay out his ſuperfluous capital on theſe great objects. The expence of building one man of war would ſuffice to make a bridge over a river of conſiderable extent, and (which ought to be a ſerious conſideration) the morals of labourers are much better preſerved than thoſe of ſeamen; and eſpecially thoſe of ſoldiers.

Another great advantage attending this conduct is, that the country would be in no danger of quarrelling with any of its neighbours, and thereby the hazard of war, which is neceſſarily attended with incalculable evils, phyſical and moral, would be avoided. To make this caſe eaſier to myſelf, I would conſider injuries done by other nations, in the ſame light as loſſes by hurricanes or earthquakes; and without indulging any reſentment, I would repair the damage as well as I could. I would not be angry where anger could anſwer no good end. If one nation affront another, the people would do beſt to take it patiently, and content themſelves with making remonſtrances. There is the trueſt dignity in this conduct; and unprovoked injuries would not often be repeated, as the

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injurious nation would ſoon find that it gained neither credit nor advantage by ſuch behaviour.

This is the caſe with independent individuals, and why ſhould it be otherwiſe with independent nations? Raſh and haſty men, ſtanding on what they fancy to be *honour*, are ever quarrelling, and doing themſelves, as well as others, infinitely more miſchief than could poſſibly ariſe from behaving with Chriſtian meekneſs and forbearance. In fact, they act like children, who have no command of their paſſions, and not like men, governed by reaſon. In this calculation, peace of mind, which is preſerved by the meek, and loſt by the quarrelſome, is a very important article.

It will be ſaid, that merchants, having no other occupation than that of ſending goods to foreign countries, by which their own is benefited, have a *right* to the protection of their country. But what is the *rule of right* in this, or any other caſe? It muſt be regulated by a regard to the good of the whole; and if the country receive more injury than benefit by any branch of buſineſs, it ought to be diſcontinued; and thoſe who engage in any buſineſs, ſhould lay their account with the riſque to which it is expoſed, as much as the farmer with the riſque of bad ſeaſons, for which his country makes him no indemnification, though his employment is as beneficial to it as that of the merchant.

If, therefore, in theſe circumſtances of extraordinary hazard, any perſon will ſend his goods to ſea, it ſhould be at his own riſque: and the country, which receives more injury than advantage from it, and whoſe peace is endangered by it, ſhould not indemnify him for any loſs. Let him, however, be fully appriſed of this; and if he will perſiſt in doing as he has done, the conſequence is to himſelf, and his country is not implicated in it.

This is a country which wants nothing but *peace*, and an attention to its natural advantages, to make

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it moſt flouriſhing and reſpectable: and wanting the manufactures of other countries, its friendſhip will be courted by them all, on account of the advantage they will derive from an intercourſe with it. Other countries being fully peopled, the inhabitants *muſt* apply to manufactures; and where can they find ſuch a market as this muſt neceſſarily be? And on account of the rivalſhip and competition which there will be among them, the people of this country cannot fail to be ſerved in the cheapeſt manner by them all. This will be independent of all their politics, with which this country has nothing to do. But if, by endeavouring to rival any of them in naval power (which will only reſemble the frog in the fable endeavouring to ſwell itſelf to the ſize of the ox) it excites their jealouſy, and this country ſhould join any one of them againſt any other, it will certainly not only loſe the advantage it might derive from the trade of that country, but pay dearly for its folly, by the evils of a ſtate of warfare.

What ſeems to be more particularly impolitic in this country, as ill ſuiting the ſtate of it, is the duty on the importation of *books*, which are ſo much wanted, and which even great encouragement could not produce here. Is it at all probable that ſuch works as the Greek and Latin claſſics, thoſe of the chriſtian Fathers, the Polyglott Bible, the Philoſophical Tranſactions, or the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences, &c. &c. will, in the time of our great grand children be printed in the United States? and yet there is a heavy duty on their importation; and for every printer, or maker of paper for printing, there are, no doubt, ſeveral thouſand purchaſers of books, all of whom are taxed for their advantage. In theſe circumſtances, it were ſurely better to have more cultivators of the ground, and fewer printers.

When I ſee at what expence ambaſſadors are ſent to foreign and diſtant countries, with which this coun-

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try has little or no intercourſe ; and when it is very problematical whether in any caſe, they have not done more harm than good, and think what ſolid advantage might be derived from half the expence in ſending out men of ſcience for the purpoſe of purchaſing works of literature and philoſophical inſtruments, of which all the univerſities and colleges of this country are moſt diſgracefully deſtitute ; and that the expence of one of the three frigates would have ſupplied all of them with teleſcopes equal to that of Dr. Herſchell, and other philoſophical inſtruments in the ſame great ſtyle, to the immortal honour of any adminiſtration, I lament that the progreſs of national wiſdom ſhould be ſo ſlow, and that our country profits ſo little by the experience and the folly of others. The Chineſe never had reſident ambaſſadors in any country, and what country has flouriſhed more than China?

A foreigner travelling in the interior part of this country, and finding the want of roads, bridges and inns, wonders that things of ſuch manifeſt utility ſhould not have more attention paid to them, when he ſees that great ſums are raiſed and expended on objects, the uſe of which is at beſt very doubtful. And men of letters coming to reſide here, find their hands tied up. Books of literature are not to be had, and philoſophical inſtruments can neither be made nor purchaſed. Every thing of the kind muſt be had from Europe, and pay a duty on importation.

But all this may be ſhort ſighted ſpeculation ; and it may be, nay I doubt not it is, better for the world at large, that its progreſs ſhould not be ſo rapid ; that a long ſtate of infancy, childhood and folly, ſhould precede that of manhood and true wiſdom ; and that vices, which will ſpring up in all countries, are better checked by the calamities of war than by reaſon and philoſophy.

It may be the wiſe plan of Providence, by means of the folly of man, to involve this country in the

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vortex of European politics, and the misery of European wars; and to prevent the importation of the means of knowledge till a better use would be made of them. Nations make slower advances in wisdom than individual men, in some proportion to their longer duration. But what they acquire at a greater expence, they retain better; so that, I doubt not, there is much wisdom in this part of the general constitution of things.

A stranger is apt to wonder that political animosity should have got to so great a height in this country, when all were so lately united in their contest with a common enemy; and that their enmity, which cannot be of long standing, should be as inveterate as in the oldest countries, where parties have subsisted time immemorial. But it may be the design of Providence, by this means, to divide this widely extended country into smaller States, which shall be at war with each other, that by their common sufferings their common vices may be corrected, and thus lay a foundation for the solid acquisition of wisdom; which will be more valued in consequence of having been more dearly bought in some future age.

Divided as the people of this country are, some in favour of France, and others of England, I should not much wonder, if the decision of the government in favour of either of them should be the cause of a civil war. But even this, the most calamitous of all events, would promote a greater agitation of men's minds, and be a more effectual check to the progress of luxury, vice, and folly, than any other mode of discipline, and at the same time that it will evince the folly of man, may display the wisdom of Him who *ruleth in the kingdoms of men*, and who appoints for all nations such governments, and such governors, as their state, and that of other countries connected with them, really requires. Pharaoh occupied as important a station in the plan of Divine Providence, as king David, though called *a*

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man after God's own heart. For his wife and excellent purposes, the one was as necessary as the other.

Many lives, no doubt, will be lost in war, civil or foreign; but men must die; and if the destruction of one generation be the means of producing another which shall be wiser and better, the good will exceed the evil, great as it may be, and greatly to be deplored, as all evils ought to be.

A stranger naturally expects to find a greater simplicity of manners, and more virtue, in this *new country*, as it is called, than in the old ones. But a nearer acquaintance with it, will convince him, that, considering how easily subsistence is procured here, and consequently how few incitements there are to the vices of the lower classes especially, there is less virtue as well as less knowledge, than in most of the countries of Europe. In many parts of the United States there is also less religion, at least of a rational and useful kind. And where there is no sense of religion, no fear of God, or respect to a future state, there will be no good morals that can be depended upon. Laws may restrain the excesses of vice, but they cannot impart the principles of virtue.

Infidelity has made great progress in France, through all the continent of Europe, and also in England; but I much question whether it be not as great in America; and the want of information in the people at large, makes thousands of them the dupes of such shallow writings as those of Mr. Paine, and the French unbelievers, several of which are translated and published here; and either through want of knowledge, or of zeal, little or nothing is done by the friends of Revelation, to stop the baneful torrent.

All this, however, I doubt not, will appear to have been ultimately for the best. Let temperate and wise men forwarn the country of its danger, and, as they are in duty bound, endeavour to prevent, or alleviate, evils of every kind. Their conduct will meet the ap-

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probation of the great Governor of the univerſe; and, in all events, He, whoſe will no foreign power can control, being the true and benevolent parent of all the human race, will provide for the happineſs of his offspring in the moſt effectual manner, though, to our imperfect underſtanding, the ſteps which lead to it be incomprehenſible. We muſt not do evil that good may come, becauſe our underſtanding is finite, and therefore we cannot be ſure that the good we intend will come. But the Divine Being, whoſe foreſight is unerring, continually acts upon that maxim, and, as we ſee, to the greateſt advantage.

A Letter to a Friend in Paris.

DEAR SIR;

YOU, who know me ſo well as you do, will be not a little ſurpriſed to ſee the account that Mr. Liancourt has given of me in his *Travels through the North American States*, and will wiſh to know what I have to ſay to it.

He repreſents me as "having come to this country to enjoy that high celebrity and diſtinction which was promiſed me by ſome flattering friends. In "this," he ſays, "I was completely deceived; and that on this account I removed to this diſtant part of the country; that the perſecuted unitarians were to join and rally under my banner, in a ſettlement in which I was to enjoy a diſtinguiſhed protection on the part of the American government,, and to ſecure me a name, as the chief of the ſect, and founder of the colony."

"My friends in Philadelphia, he ſays, ſolicited for me the profeſſorſhip of chemiſtry in the college; but that this was far beneath my expectations, and that of my family;

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" and in fine, that it became neceſſary for the preſervation of " my celebrity in Europe to withdraw from the ſcene."

He alſo ſays that " I frequently laugh at the world, but in " a manner that clearly appears not to be from my heart." He adds that " I was buſy in the inſtitution of a college, and " that" (according to the Engliſh tranſlator, for it is not ſo in the French) " ſeven thouſand acres had been aſſigned me as a " free gift."*

Every article of this account muſt have come either from Mr. Liancourt's own imagination, or the information of perſons who ignorantly or wilfully deceived him; for there is no truth in any part of it. If I may be believed, and thoſe who know me better than Mr. Liancourt can do, will not queſtion what I ſay, I had no flattering friend to promiſe me the high celebrity he ſays I came to enjoy, nor have I been at all diſappointed in my views with reſpect to this country. Indeed, if I had the high celebrity that he ſpeaks of in Europe, I could hardly have been very anxious about any addition to it from America.

I came to Northumberland to be near to a ſettlement that had been projected for a number of Engliſhmen, but not particularly for unitarians. It is a full proof of this, that of thoſe who were ſelected to judge of the lands, and carry the ſcheme into execution, only my ſon was of the ſame religious perſuaſion with myſelf. Though this ſcheme was abandoned, my wife and I liking this place, we determined to ſettle here, before I heard any thing of the profeſſorſhip of chemiſtry. If any friend ſolicited this place for me I am to this day ignorant of it. It was offered to me by an unanimous vote of the truſtees of the Univerſity, but I did not accept of it, becauſe I did not want the emoluments of it, and it would have in-

* A writer in the *Philadelphia Gazette* ſays, that the preſidentſhip of this college was intended as a proviſion for me, at the ſame time, characterizing me by ſome opprobrious appellation in the ſtyle of Peter Porcupine, but which I do not now recollect. But it is well known that I undertook to diſcharge the duties of this office and to give lectures *gratis*, as I had done at the New College in Hackney, near to which I reſided in England. In truth, I expected much trouble, and but little thanks, for my pains. But after five years of efforts on the part of the friends of this inſtitution, nothing has hitherto been done beyond the erection of a ſhell of a building, the expence of which is not yet defrayed; and it does not appear probable that my ſervices will be called for while I ſhall be capable of giving them.

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terfered with the leiſure which I did want for my various purſuits.

That Mr. Liancourt, or any other perſon, ever heard me "laugh at the world" is abſolutely falſe. No perſon living, I am perſuaded, is better ſatisfied with the world, and the diſpenſations of the great author of it, and eſpecially his own lot in it, than I am; and for the truth of this I can ſafely appeal to every perſon who has really known me in any ſituation, here or in England.

There is as little foundation for another of Mr. Liancourt's inſinuations to my prejudice. He ſays, "he was received by "my ſon and myſelf with as much politeneſs as our cold and "gloomy tempers ever diſplay; that ſome Engliſhmen, who "lately arrived in America, intended to ſettle in the vicinity "of Northumberland, but that they abandoned that intention, "diſguſted with a ſort of precedence claimed by me, and my "family, and by the auſterity of our manners."

I wiſh he had named theſe perſons, and I now call upon him to do it; that the appeal may be made to them. There are many Engliſh families now ſettled in this place, and I never heard that any of them ever complained of the auſterity of our manners, or of any precedence claimed by us; nor is it eaſy to ſay in what manner any precedence can be claimed in a ſituation like ours. We received Mr. Liancourt and his friend in the beſt manner in our power, and without any proſpect of a return; and from the politeneſs of Frenchmen in general I ſhould have expected a more favourable notice of us.

If I may judge of Mr. Liancourt by what I ſaw of him, (and I ſaw juſt as much of him as he did of me,) I ſhould imagine that I paſs as many chearful hours, both alone and in company, as he does. For a Frenchman, we all thought him rather dull. But we conſidered that out of France he was out of his natural element. Otherwiſe, there would, I doubt not, have been more good humour, and alſo more truth, in his account of Northumberland.

If I complained of any want of reſpect being ſhewn to me on my arrival in this country, or at any time ſince, I muſt have been very unreaſonable. The various expreſſions of it being entirely unexpected by me, and being unuſed to any thing of the kind, I was not a little embarraſſed with them; but I acquitted myſelf as well as I could. The mention of the particulars, though thus called for, would ſubject me to the charge of vanity. Had Mr. Liancourt been re-

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ceived in the ſame manner, we ſhould, I doubt not, have had the full detail of them in the account of his travels.

When I arrived the tide of popular opinion in politics was with me. After ſome time it turned, and not turning with it, I could not expect to be borne up by it. It is now turning again; but not being a politician by profeſſion, this is a circumſtance on which I do not lay any ſtreſs. As to ſtateſmen and politicians in general, there are none of them whoſe opinion concerning me is of more conſequence to me, than my opinion concerning them is to them, and I have no favours to aſk of any of them.

A welcome reception in any place muſt neceſſarily depend upon the claſs and character of thoſe by whom a perſon is received. Every thing favourable in my reception in this country, I attribute to my being conſidered as a friend of general liberty, which is profeſſed by all Americans. But I could not be chagrined, if, as a Chriſtian, I was not reſpected by unbelievers, as an Unitarian, by Trinitarians, or as a Democrat by Ariſtocrats; becauſe I was in known oppoſition to them.

If Mr. Liancourt's account of the perſons who did not chuſe to ſettle in Northumberland on account of the auſterity of our manners be not altogether from his own imagination, he muſt refer to ſome perſons who, being unbelievers in chriſtianity, might perhaps preſume that our tempers were gloomy becauſe we were chriſtians, and give this idea of us to him. But what rational or probable ground could there be for this opinion?

Few perſons have had more opportunities of being acquainted with unbelievers in every ſphere of life than myſelf, and from the beſt obſervations that I have been able to make, I would not exchange my feelings for thoſe of any of them. Indeed, what can be the ſource of joy to any perſon, who knows that he muſt ſoon die, and who believes that he ſhall then be blotted out of exiſtence, compared with thoſe of the man who believes that he is born for eternity, and that his ſphere of action and enjoyment will riſe in proportion to the duration of his being?

Place me in the loweſt condition of human life, as poor, oppreſſed, and perſecuted, as may be imagined, and only let me be a chriſtian, and I ſhall not envy the proudeſt monarch, or the moſt ſelf-ſufficient philoſopher. I ſhould even look down upon them, but with compaſſion to them, and the deepeſt humility, and unfeigned gratitude to that great

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Being who has given me this unſpeakable advantage, in the knowledge of the beſt of his gifts to man. Unbelievers, I doubt not, as well as all other men, have the ſame great ultimate deſtination, but it is unknown to them, and therefore they cannot have that enobling elevation of mind, which the belief of it is calculated to inſpire.

Unbelievers, or any other perſons who have good health, and good animal ſpirits, the effect of a good digeſtion, will, like all other animals, have a certain degree of enjoyment; but as far as *reflection* can add to this (and this muſt be a conſiderable article in the happineſs of all intelligent beings) it is very little, compared to the reſources that chriſtianity ſupplies.

I may be allowed to have ſome knowledge of the reſources of general literature and philoſophy; and theſe are, no doubt, conſiderable, compared to thoſe of a perſon who is wholly illiterate. But the whole range of thought in the mind of an unbeliever, compared to that of a chriſtian, is not ſo much as the narrow orbit of Mercury, to the immenſe ſweep of the planet Herſchell, and the objects it preſents are great and intereſting, in proportion to its extent. But this is equally loſt to the mere *nominal chriſtians*, who take no pleaſure in the ſtudy of the ſcriptures, and to abſolute unbelievers. That I do not advance this in favour of chriſtianity at random, may be preſumed from the age to which I am now arrived, and the experience of various viciſſitudes of life.

There is almoſt as little truth in Mr. Liancourt's account of my neighbour Mrs. Darch (not Daſh as he writes the name) as in what he ſays of me and of my ſituation and proſpects. He very juſtly commends the ſpirit and perſeverance of Mrs. Darch, but he adds what is by no means true, that "on the land on which ſhe is ſettled not an inch "was cultivated, that ſix months ago not a hut was to be "ſeen, and not a tree felled," whereas there had been a family of the name of Macloud ſettled there about fifteen years, and all the land had been cleared before ſhe purchaſed it. The only improvement of any conſequence that ſhe has made was to make a new road through a part of the ground.

He ſays, ſhe was then building a ſtone houſe. The houſe is now built, but it is of wood like my own. Two of her daughters, he ſays, were married; whereas this was the caſe of only one of them.

I have not noticed all the errors of Mr. Liancourt's account of this reſpectable family, and one of his reflections is equally cruel and unjuſt.

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Of Mr. Liancourt's work in other reſpects I do not pretend to judge, having ſeen little of North America beſides the place in which I reſide; but I cannot help ſuſpecting, from this ſpecimen, that many of his other obſervations are equally haſty and inaccurate.

Requeſting that you would make this letter public, and tranſmit a copy of it to Mr. Liancourt, that he may have an opportunity of defending what he has publiſhed,

I am,

Dear Sir,

Yours ſincerely,

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland, January 1801.

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